

# Guidance on contingency assessment arrangements for approved GCSEs, AS and A levels



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## Foreword

This document gives centres an overview of what the requirements will be in the unlikely event that a decision is made by Welsh Government to cancel the summer exam series. The information in this document is not intended to distract from preparations for exams in the summer.

Given the events of the past few years, we know there is a small chance that alternative arrangements could once again be needed in the future. Centres should therefore prepare for the possible implementation of the contingency arrangements by planning what assessments they will use to inform centre determined grades, should they be needed, so that the collection of assessment evidence can start as soon as possible and as appropriate for each centre. For this to be manageable alongside preparation for the summer exam series, centres should aim to use assessments that are integrated into usual teaching and learning and existing assessment plans.

Assessments should be marked, and feedback provided to learners to support preparation for the summer exam series and to allow their use as evidence for a centre determined grade, in the unlikely event that this becomes necessary. Centres must inform learners which assessments will be used to gather evidence as part of potential contingency arrangements if exams are cancelled. Should that happen, the assessments will be used to support a holistic judgement of a centre determined qualification grade.

### **Key points for centres, in the unlikely event that exams are cancelled:**

1. If exams are cancelled, then centres will be asked to determine centre qualification grades for their learners.
2. Centre determined grades are overall qualification grades that are produced through a holistic judgment that is underpinned by a number of pieces of evidence of demonstrated attainment.
3. You should not determine qualification grades unless exams are cancelled, and more guidance is published.
4. You need to consider what assessment evidence will be used to support decisions about qualification grades if exams are cancelled.
5. You need to tell learners which assessments will be used to determine qualification grades so that they can prepare and, if necessary, you need to update any data processing notices.
6. You need to mark all assessments consistently so that the evidence can be used if needed.
7. You can provide feedback to learners on each assessment, as you would normally.

<sup>1</sup>Alternative arrangements for the Skills Challenge Certificate qualifications will be communicated separately.

8. Learners must not be allowed to re-take the same assessment for the purpose of improving their grade if exams are cancelled.

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. This guidance sets out high level information for centres<sup>2</sup> relating to contingency **assessment arrangements** for the summer exam series, that will apply in the unlikely event that the exam series is cancelled.
- 1.2. To allow centres to focus on the exam series, further details will only be communicated to centres if exams are cancelled.
- 1.3. If the exam series is cancelled, we will issue guidance with additional detail. For example, more information will be provided on external quality assurance processes.
- 1.4. The high-level information in this guidance is not intended to support the award of centre determined grades at this stage. Overall centre determined grading decisions should only be made if exams are cancelled and only once the appropriate supporting information has been provided for centres to be able to do this as effectively as possible.
- 1.5. The centre determined grade approach would be similar to that used in summer 2021, but with some changes to take account of lessons learned. Therefore, this guidance is **not** identical to the guidance produced previously.

## 2. Equalities

- 2.1. Centres are required to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)<sup>3</sup> at all times, including in the production of centre determined grades. There are also specific duties for Wales which set out the steps that must be taken to demonstrate due regard for the general duty<sup>4</sup>. This means that centres need to communicate with learners, and parents/carers in a clear, transparent, and accessible way, and take into consideration the needs of those who share protected characteristics.
- 2.2. The Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) produced guidance on complying with the PSED for summer 2021 which was made available on [Hwb](https://www.hwb.gov.wales)<sup>5</sup>. WJEC and Diverse Cymru also provided training on avoiding unconscious bias. This guidance and training is still relevant.
- 2.3. Centres should implement processes to fulfil their duties to promote equality and avoid discrimination. Guidance is available in 'What equality law means for you as an education provider in Wales: Schools'<sup>6</sup>.
- 2.4. If exams are cancelled, some flexibility may be required in the use of evidence of attainment in certain circumstances, to avoid indirect discrimination e.g. if a learner misses teaching of content that is assessed, then an alternative assessment might be required.

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<sup>2</sup> Centre(s) is the term used throughout the document to refer to schools, colleges and other exam centres.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/149>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2011/1064/contents/made>

<sup>5</sup> [hwb is the digital platform for learning and teaching in Wales https://hwb.gov.wales](https://www.hwb.gov.wales)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publication-download/what-equality-law-means-you-education-provider-wales>

- 2.5. If exams are cancelled, centres will be required by WJEC to implement internal quality assurance processes to promote consistency of the centre determined grade approach across the centre (within subjects and across subjects).

### 3. What will centre determined grades measure?

- 3.1. If exams are cancelled, centre determined grades will be awarded on the basis of demonstrated attainment in areas of the qualification content that a learner has covered. Centre determined grades are **not** the same as target or predicted grades as they will not be awarded on the basis of potential attainment.
- 3.2. It is expected that assessment evidence collected would cover all assessment objectives and represent sufficient coverage of breadth of **specification content** requirements.

### 4. What assessment evidence should be collected?

- 4.1. Centres must inform learners about the evidence that could be used in determining their overall qualification grades in the event of the cancellation of exams, in advance of the assessments taking place. Centres might have assessment plans for each subject, but they are not required.
- 4.2. Centres may find it useful to communicate their assessment approach with their learners and parents/carers, to provide transparency and confidence in the approach.
- 4.3. Centres must not provide learners with specific details of assessment questions or past papers that will be used. Assessments should be completed in exam-style conditions. It is important that the assessments used to support judgements provide a true and authentic representation of the learner's level of attainment. This will be distorted if the learner has prior knowledge of the questions that will be asked or can access the work of other learners.
- 4.4. Assessment evidence must come from work completed by the learner, during the course of study for the qualification. It is expected that evidence would include work from units assessed by exam and non-exam assessments as appropriate to the specific qualification specification.
- 4.5. Centres must consider reasonable adjustments that learners are entitled to and apply them for all assessments used as evidence.
- 4.6. The number of pieces and type of evidence required will not be prescribed, since this will vary by qualification and how key themes and skills are organised in assessments.
- 4.7. Undertaking assessments for potential contingency assessment arrangements should not distract from preparation for the summer exam series. Therefore, a few pieces of substantial, high-quality, authentic evidence will be sufficient to demonstrate attainment. As a guide, time spent on assessments to inform a centre determined grade for each subject should not exceed the total assessment time learners would complete in a standard exam series for that subject.
- 4.8. Centres will need to retain assessment evidence for learners which may be required as part of the quality assurance process if the contingency arrangements are triggered.
- 4.9. WJEC will provide guidance on making overall qualification grade judgements, grade descriptors and quality assurance guidance only if the contingency is triggered.

### 5. Record keeping

- 5.1. Records will be needed to document grading decisions, should this become necessary, but are not required unless exams are cancelled. Centres should consider the information that they will need to record and ensure that it is retained appropriately. For example, recording that a learner's access arrangements were put in place when assessments were taken.
- 5.2. Centres should retain information relating to any special considerations that some learners may be entitled to if they were affected by an event, such as bereavement or family illness, at the time of an assessment.
- 5.3. Centres will need to ensure they are compliant with their obligations as a data controller pursuant to data protection legislation and should review data protection impact assessments and privacy notices prior to any data processing for the contingency commencing.

## **6. Quality assurance processes**

- 6.1. If exams are cancelled, centres will be required to implement internal quality assurance processes to promote consistency of the centre determined grade approach across the centre (within subjects and across subjects). There will be no additional internal quality assurance requirements to those required in summer 2021, though centres may choose to review and update their internal processes, as necessary. Centres will not be required to submit a Centre Assessment Policy.
- 6.2. If exams are cancelled, WJEC may implement a programme of external centre quality assurance processes (this depends on the timing of any decision). This will include the sampling of learner work and the corresponding grading decisions made by a centre. Therefore, centres must retain all relevant assessment evidence used.
- 6.3. WJEC will provide guidance on quality assurance processes only if the contingency is triggered.

## **7. Private candidates**

- 7.1. Options to ensure access to qualification grades for learners who are not on a centre's roll and who would normally enter these qualifications as private candidates have been explored. We will share this information as soon as possible if exams are cancelled.
- 7.2. Where private candidates are registered early with a centre, then they could complete assessments throughout the year, as for the on-roll learners. This would enable a centre determined grade to be produced in the same way.
- 7.3. If exams are cancelled, we will work with Welsh Government, local authorities and other relevant stakeholder groups to ensure communication is as wide as possible so that learners who enter for qualifications as private candidates know what the process will be.

## **8. Information and support for learners**

- 8.1. We continue to work with Welsh Government and other partners to communicate measures to support learners' wellbeing and progression.
- 8.2. Learners need to be informed of assessments that might be used as evidence in the overall judgement of their centre determined grade if exams are cancelled. This is so that data protection rules are followed. This transparency goes some way to mitigating the risk that lower motivation levels disadvantage a learner.

- 8.3. Centres should share reassuring, consistent and clear messages to learners about these arrangements, such as:
- unless exams are cancelled, you are preparing for assessment via exams, in line with the qualification assessment requirements,
  - this guidance does not mean that all work/assessments completed by learners could be used as evidence and
  - these contingency arrangements are outlined, just in case there is an event such as a public health situation that leads to the cancellation of exams. It is a backup plan.
- 8.4. Assessments carried out over the course of the year could be used as evidence of attainment, rather than relying more on assessments carried out in the final weeks of the course, if exams are cancelled. This helps to spread the assessments out for learners and for centre staff who will be marking assessments. It also reduces the risk linked to leaving most assessment until the end of the course and an event at that time making this difficult. Some learners may feel concerned about these ongoing assessments and feel more pressure as a result. Centres should provide suitable pastoral and wellbeing support during this difficult time. For example, centres might plan for regular updates for learners in cohorts sitting exams in the summer.
- 8.5. To prepare for exams, centres will provide feedback to learners when they complete assessments, as part of the normal teaching and learning programmes. Marks and indications of performance in these tasks might be shared with learners, to motivate and guide them. It is important that this feedback is not related to centre determined grades at this stage. If exams are cancelled and centre determined grades need to be produced, then WJEC will provide further guidance about using evidence to support a holistic, overall judgement of attainment that is supported by these assessments.
- 8.6. There will be information for learners, parents and carers on our website about the contingency plans. We will work with Welsh Government, WJEC and schools and colleges to provide relevant information.
- 8.7. The Children's Commissioner for Wales website includes information about support services for young people, including mental health and emotional support.

## 9. Information and guidance for centres

- 9.1. WJEC has previously provided the following guidance that is useful:
- Assessment Creation Guidance
- 9.2. Other information and guidance from summer 2021 that is relevant:
- EHRC's Guidance on complying with the PSED
  - WJEC guidance on avoiding unconscious bias
  - Data protection and data processing
- 9.3. If exams are cancelled, further information and guidance will be provided. This will include guidance on overall qualification grading and the appeals process.
- 9.4. In 2021, the Information Commissioner's Office suggested links to guidance that might be particularly relevant. These were as follows:
- The main guide on the UK General Data Protection Regulation:  
<https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-data-protection/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr/>
  - Within this main guide, the following sections are likely to be particularly relevant:
  - Guidance on Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIAs), including a template DPIA and checklists to help data controllers determine whether a DPIA is

necessary

- Guidance on the Right to be informed, which will help all data controllers involved in the assessments process to develop and provide good quality privacy information for candidates
- Guidance on the processing of special category personal data, which includes a template policy document for that processing.