



Guidance on Assessment and Grading for Summer 2021

Alternative Arrangements



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Introduction

As outlined in Qualifications Wales' document [Guidance for alternative arrangements for approved GCSE, AS and A level qualifications](#) for the summer 2021 series, due to the policy decision taken to cancel the summer exams, centres will determine the grades to award to their learners for the following qualifications:

- Qualifications Wales approved GCSE, AS and A level
- Skills Challenge Certificates
- Level 2 and Level 3 Health and Social Care: Principles and Contexts
- Level 2 Children's Care, Play, Learning and Development (Unit 216)

Qualifications Wales' document states that *whilst the approach to producing the Centre Determined Grades (CDGs) will be holistic in its nature, it needs to be underpinned by sufficient evidence of demonstrated attainment across key themes and skills.*

Centre Determined Grades must:

- be awarded on the basis of demonstrated attainment in areas of the qualification content that a learner has covered
- be based on a holistic judgement, underpinned by sufficient evidence of demonstrated attainment across key themes and skills
- not attempt to indicate potential in a subject.

This guidance is intended to support teachers, lecturers, subject and curriculum leaders, as well as senior leaders in making Centre Determined Grade judgements. Section one provides guidance on assessments and section two provides guidance on grading. Further guidance on use of data for senior leaders and governors in monitoring, quality assuring and signing off final grades will be issued in due course.

Section One: Guidance on assessments

We have provided, on the [secure website](#), a Qualification Assessment Framework for each qualification which outlines the key requirements for progression that centres should cover. The frameworks provide various examples of assessment tasks that could be used to evidence learning. Due to the loss of face-to-face teaching and learning time, as a result of the pandemic, we advise teachers/lecturers to ensure that all assessment objectives are covered as fully as possible to ensure there is sufficient coverage of the breadth of specification requirements but with some aspects covered in greater depth than others. It is worth noting that evidence of high achievement in a narrow aspect of the specification will not, on its own, justify a high grade. The aim is to have sufficient evidence of each learner's knowledge, skills and understanding to determine the appropriate grade, which will aid centres in considering learners' achievements against the grade descriptors provided by us.

Assessment evidence can be generated from a range of activities which could include:

- WJEC past papers (adapted as appropriate)
- mock exams
- NEA (including incomplete NEA)
- other assessed work.

Past papers

To assist schools and colleges with their assessment plans for 2021, we have provided a full suite of past paper assessments to match the adaptations outlined in our [GCSE and GCE Adaptations Information Book](#). This suite comprises two or three past papers for every unit normally assessed by examination (including oral and practical assessments where appropriate). Teachers can select the past paper most appropriate to the content their learners have studied.

Please note that whilst we have provided past paper assessments for every unit, not every past paper is adapted. Some units do not have adaptations to content and, where this is the case, it is not necessary to adapt the past paper. Even where there are adaptations to content, some of the past papers do not require adaptations as they already match the adapted content. Therefore, you may find that some past paper assessments are structured slightly differently to normal, for example, they may be shorter and have a different total mark. However, there will be no change to the question types learners can expect to encounter.

As well as providing a marking scheme for each past paper, we have produced assessment training materials, which include marked exemplars, to assist teachers in reaching accurate and fair judgements. These will be available on the secure website, week commencing March 22.

It is anticipated that teachers/lecturers will select a past paper that assesses the content they have taught their class. However, if the selected past paper covers almost all the taught content, with some minor omissions, the teacher can remove the questions that assess the content not taught. The teacher will need to adapt the mark scheme and account for the removal of the content in relation to the notional grade boundary provided by us for that paper. Any adaptations to the past paper, made by the centre, should be quality assured as outlined in our *Assessment Creation Guide* published on the summer 2021 section of our [secure website](#).

NEA

NEA is an important aspect of many qualifications, and provides learners with opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and application of skills. For qualifications where NEA tasks change from year to year, teachers may set current NEA tasks for their learners to complete, or alternatively, they may use tasks from previous series. Current restrictions may hamper learners' ability to complete all aspects of their NEA (for example they may have restricted or no access to specialist equipment, facilities, and software). Due to such restrictions, incomplete work, or alternative evidence demonstrating learners' knowledge, understanding and application of skills in the relevant aspects of the qualification specification, irrespective of the form the NEA is presented, can be used as evidence.

Further guidance is available in our [NEA Adaptations Information Book](#) and subject specific guidance is available on summer 2021 area of our [secure website](#).

As with past papers, if centres adapt our published or previously published NEA tasks, they will need to adapt the accompanying mark scheme and notional grade boundaries to account for the changes in content and, where appropriate, the standard.

Other assessed work

The use of our past paper assessments or NEA tasks is not mandated. Centres may use other assessed work to evidence learning.

Centres can choose to set their own assessments and are advised to read our *Assessment Creation Guide*, available on the [secure website](#), to ensure the assessments they devise are valid and reliable, especially for the purpose of awarding qualifications to learners.

Alternatively, teachers/lecturers might adapt questions from our past papers to match aspects of the specification content that has been taught and to ensure the tasks remain valid, reliable, and fair. Both approaches are covered by the guide and in the accompanying online training materials.

When assessing the areas studied, centres are advised to consider how knowledge, skills and understanding are usually sampled by us in each examination series. We advise centres to refer to the grade descriptors provided in the Qualification Assessment Framework and in the Grade Descriptors booklet, available on the [secure website](#), and/or current specification assessment criteria/mark schemes to ensure centre-developed assessments are of a comparable standard.

To ensure valid and reliable outcomes we advise that centre-devised tasks, whether taken as in-class tests, or completed as classwork (either face-to-face or remotely), follow the same format as our assessment materials and are marked in a way that reflects our marking schemes.

Task taking

We advise centres to carefully consider the purpose of the assessments they set and how they are used in the final grading judgements. Formative assessments are used to monitor learning and provide ongoing feedback to learners to improve their understanding and/or skills in a specific area. Summative assessments are used to evaluate learning at the end of an activity, are more structured, and can draw together aspects of knowledge, understanding and application of skills from different areas or aspects of a unit and/or the specification. Summative assessments are usually a more valid and reliable way to evaluate the level at which a learner has attained the requisite knowledge, skills and understanding outlined in the qualification specification.

The assessment arrangements in place this year rightly afford teachers and learners greater flexibility than in a standard series. However, centres must take the conditions under which assessments have been taken into account when making their final grading judgements.

To ensure that no learner is advantaged or disadvantaged, centres, when setting summative assessment activities, must consider:

- supervision (direct/indirect and face-to-face/remote)
- duration of each task (reflective of the duration of related tasks in a standard series)
- feedback provided to the learner whilst undertaking the assessment
- opportunities to re-draft work
- access arrangements provided to learners who have been approved to receive such arrangements.

When taking summative assessments that have the potential to be used as evidence to support the final grade determined by the centre, we advise that learners are:

- given sufficient notice of the assessment and told which topics will be covered, although the teacher should not provide the assessment to the learner to view in advance,
- given the same time to complete the assessment as in a standard series (eg 45 minutes to complete an essay)
- given the same access to resource materials as in a standard series (ie audio/visual material; unannotated texts)
- informed that the evidence they produce must be their own unaided work
- informed they cannot access mobile phones or the internet unless this is required to access the assessment.

If centres are using our assessment materials, or a centre-devised assessment similar in structure to our assessment materials, to generate evidence of learning, there is no requirement for such assessments to take place in one session as an 'examination'. The centre can divide the assessment into sections to suit the programme of learning. For example, if in a standard two-hour examination, the learner would normally complete three essays, then it would be feasible to set the learner each of the three essays to complete in separate 40 minute sessions, once they had completed the learning for each element of the unit. Learners with approved access arrangements would be given their additional extra time to complete the assessment tasks. This is to ensure fairness for all learners, and to avoid task taking conditions being used as a grounds for appeal by learners when they receive their final centre determined grade.

To ensure fairness for all learners, teachers/lecturers must be confident that any work completed remotely by a learner is authentic and is their own unaided work. We strongly advise centres to inform learners that any work they produce that will be used as evidence to determine their final grade must be their own work, and if that is not the case and remains undeclared, it would constitute malpractice. Where a learner has received assistance, this must be acknowledged so that centres can award accurate and fair grades. Additionally, if a learner has had access to additional resource material, has been given a lengthy period to produce the evidence, has been given the opportunity to re-draft work based on feedback provided by the teacher, or has only been assessed on a very narrow aspect of the content, this must be taken into account when weighting the evidence and in awarding the overall grade. Further information is provided in the grading guidance in section two.

If teachers/lecturers suspect that a learner's work is not their own unaided work, as declared by the learner, it should be reported as malpractice. We advise that regular checks are undertaken to authenticate work not completed under the direct supervision by the teacher/lecturer. This could be achieved by:

- conducting a question and answer session with the learner to discuss aspects of their responses
- online video conferencing to observe working and discussing progress with the learner
- comparing learner performance at home with work completed within the classroom
- setting specific timescales for the work to be started and finished, and keeping records of when the work was produced
- reminding learners of the risks of getting help at home from family members which could constitute over-assistance and might lead to a malpractice investigation.

To ensure fairness, it is recommended that all learners in the class take the same assessment at the same time. If a learner is unable to take the assessment at the same time as others, then they should be given a different assessment of the same nature.

As outlined in the requirements and guidance, learners must be informed of how and when they will be assessed. If a learner has produced a valid and reliable assessment which is an accurate reflection of the standard at which they are working, prior to the Minister's announcement in January regarding the awarding of qualifications this summer, such work can be used by the teacher in determining the final grade.

Section Two: Guidance on making grading decisions for teachers, lecturers, and subject/curriculum leaders

To determine a grade, teachers and lecturers will make a holistic judgement based on the evidence they have of the learner's performance in the subject. This guidance aims to support teachers and lecturers in thinking about the different factors to consider when making their judgement.

You may find going through the following stages helpful when determining a grade:

- Consider what you have taught
- Collect the evidence
- Evaluate the quality of the evidence
- Consider extenuating circumstances
- Assign a grade

Stage 1: Consider what you have taught

You will need to consider the extent to which you have been able to teach the content of the adapted specification to this cohort of learners, with reference to the key requirements for progression as outlined in the specific Qualification Assessment Framework. The evidence used to make your judgement should only include assessment of content that has been taught.

Stage 2: Collect the evidence

Our Qualification Assessment Frameworks set out the requirements to support production of Centre Determined Grades for each qualification.

Assessment evidence can also come from a range of activities which could include:

- WJEC past papers (adapted as appropriate)
- mock exams,
- other past papers provided by WJEC
- NEA (including incomplete NEA)
- other assessed work.

The number of pieces and type of evidence required to support judgements is not prescribed, but there should be sufficient coverage of the breadth of specification requirements with aspects, at the centre's discretion, covered in greater depth. There should be coverage of the assessment objectives within or across the units, with reference to the examples provided in the specific Qualification Assessment Framework.

Ideally, the evidence used will be consistent across the class or cohort, but in some cases evidence for individual learners may vary, depending on specific or extenuating circumstances. You should therefore consider if there are any gaps that need to be filled and, if that is the case, identify the additional assessment(s) to fill such gaps. Where individual learners have gaps that require significant differences in evidence to the rest of the cohort, this should be documented clearly in the decision-making record.

Stage 3: Evaluate the quality of the evidence

When considering how suitable the evidence is in determining the grade you should consider the following factors:

- coverage of assessment objectives
- coverage of content (reference Qualification Assessment Framework)
- authenticity: how confident are you that it is the learner's own work?
- level of control: was the assessment taken in timed conditions without access to additional resources; was there an opportunity for redrafting; was it supervised?
- marking: what internal standardisation processes have been applied to ensure a consistent marking standard?
- grading: is there a notional grade boundary provided for the assessment(s) which indicates the learner's attainment standard?
- the context in which each piece of evidence was completed: as an informal or more formal assessment; as a piece of formative or summative assessment.

Evidence you believe is an authentic representation of the learner's performance will give you confidence in your overall holistic judgement.

Stage 4: Consider extenuating circumstances

Reasonable adjustments for disabled learners and access arrangements¹ should have been in place when evidence was generated. Where they were not, you should consider replacing such evidence with an assessment conducted with the appropriate arrangements in place. Where this is not possible, this should be noted so that it can be considered in your grading judgement. Where appropriate, this should include input from appropriate specialist teachers/lecturers and other professionals.

Special consideration requests, in the event that a learner is unable to take an assessment or suffers a traumatic event that might affect their performance, will not apply this summer because learners will not be taking their exams. However, where illness might have temporarily affected performance, for example in mock exams, centres should bear that in mind when making their judgements. Further information is available in appendix 3 of our *Guide to centre policy on assessments and quality assurance processes*.

You should only grade each learner on their performance in the subject content they have been taught, therefore check that the learner has been taught the content that has been assessed in the evidence and consider if any of the pieces of evidence assess the learner on material that they have not been taught because of, for example, lack of access to online learning during lockdown for a significant period of time, due to no fault of the learner.²

If so, consider the feasibility of the learner covering the content prior to the assessment being taken. If that is not possible, you could remove that piece of evidence, replacing it with other relevant evidence to ensure sufficient coverage of the breadth and depth of the specification content, as outlined in the Qualification Assessment Framework.

¹ For further information on access arrangements, refer to appendix 2 in our Centre policy on assessment and quality assurance processes for the summer 2021 alternative arrangements

² A **significant** period of time, in this context, is considered to be when a learner has **genuinely** not been able to access learning (either face-to-face or online) **due to no fault of their own** (ie serious illness or faulty equipment) for **more than twenty school days** (excluding weekends) compared to other members of their class/cohort.

Stage 5: Assign a grade

Once evidence has been considered, teachers and lecturers should make a grading judgement. The following principles should be applied to each decision.

A holistic, best fit judgement. Grades should be based on a holistic judgement of the evidence of the learner's performance on the subject content they have been taught. Look at the qualities of the work you have collected and use the sources of support available to help you reach a final grade. This will include your professional experience of the assessment materials used as well as the descriptors for key grades provided in our Qualification Assessment Frameworks. The grade descriptions provided by us will give a general indication of the standards of achievement likely to have been shown by learners awarded particular grades. The descriptions must be interpreted in relation to the content detailed in the specification (as adapted for 2021, where appropriate).

Exemplar material, based on examples from previous exam series, will be provided on our Secure Website by April 30 to illustrate the expected holistic grading standard. Both the grade descriptors and the exemplar material combined, are intended to support the application of a consistent standard between centres, by anchoring judgements across the grade range. The standard expected for any particular grade is no lower than previous years, but the volume of work completed in the specification will inevitably be lower for many learners. This means that learners in different centres will be awarded the same grades having covered different proportions of the specification, whilst meeting the key requirements to ensure progression as outlined in the Qualification Assessment Framework.

GCSEs, AS and A levels are designed to be compensatory. When identifying the grade that represents a 'best-fit', note that:

- learners do not have to demonstrate all aspects of the descriptor to receive that grade
- whilst there is no specific content of which a learner must have demonstrated knowledge and understanding to achieve a grade, it is important that there is evidence of attainment across sufficient breadth of content
- learners can achieve the same grade by demonstrating different combinations of knowledge, skills and understanding. Strengths in some areas may balance shortcomings in other areas.

The most appropriate grade to award will depend, in practice, upon the extent to which the learner has met the assessment objectives overall.

These points apply in any examination series. You should apply your professional judgement with this in mind and decide whether the knowledge and skills demonstrated meet the usual standard expected for the grade.

An appropriate balance of evidence for assessment objectives. Although weightings are not prescribed, you should take account of unit and assessment objective weightings in the specification (including the effect of any adaptations made for 2021). Evidence of high achievement in a narrow aspect of the specification will not, on its own, justify a high grade.

Demonstrated attainment, not potential. The grade awarded must be based on the learner's performance in the evidence you have collected. If all the collated evidence suggests a learner is performing consistently at a grade B, a grade B should be awarded; there would be no reason to consider awarding that learner a grade A or A*. Information held in tracking systems that provide target or predicted grades based on assessment inputs and data modelling can be used to support grading decisions, but it is essential that the final grade is derived solely based on performances produced by learners, i.e., the evidence used to determine the grade to input to the system, and not a predicted trajectory or a target grade.

Objectivity. When setting a grade, you must follow your centre's process to ensure grade judgments are as objective and fair as possible, so that they are assured that they have fulfilled their duties to promote equality and avoid discrimination. Guidance on what equality law means to centres and training on avoiding unconscious bias will be made available to centres during the week commencing March 22nd to facilitate more objective judgements.

Points to note:

- The award of a Centre Determined Grade of a U is appropriate where there is not enough evidence of demonstrated attainment to award a best-fit grade to a G (at GCSE) or E (AS or A level) or where evidence suggests attainment is below that required for the lowest grade.
- For tiered GCSEs, all grades must reflect the tier of entry.

Record a rationale on the decision making record

A decision making record will be provided by us. This must be used by centre staff to record the Centre Determined Grade for each learner, along with a clear and unambiguous rationale as to how the evidence selected led to the final grading judgement. This helps to ensure that you have determined the correct grade for a learner and could justify the grade awarded should there be a request for a review of the grade or an appeal.

The decision making record will be made available by the end of March.

To ease the administrative burden, we will provide a spreadsheet template which the centre can use to input information, filtering the spreadsheet accordingly for ease of use for their classes or cohorts. The fields will include:

- identifier for each piece of evidence used to determine the grade
- mark or grade awarded for each piece of evidence
- provisional grade determined by the centre
- rationale for the grade (outlining how the different forms of evidence have been balanced in determining the final grade)
- confirmation of any special consideration or access arrangements provided (only if relevant)
- outcome of the internal quality assurance process (only for learners selected as part of the internal sample)
- confirmation that the range of processes, outlined by WJEC, have been implemented.

An individual decision making record can be generated and printed to PDF for each learner from the information either automatically populated or input by the teacher from the spreadsheet. These records need to be stored and shared with the learner as part of the centre review process.

Centres may choose to complete the individual record without use of the spreadsheet function. A Word version will be provided for that purpose.

The decision record will also include a section for the centre review process. Further information on that process will be available when the review/appeals documentation is published.

Worked examples

These are examples of how the principles and process described above might be applied by a teacher or lecturer to individual learners

It is expected that you will take into account contextual factors and your evaluation of the quality of the evidence you have collected, when determining how much notional weight to assign to each piece. The examples that follow illustrate how that might work.

Learner 1

Stage 2: The teacher/lecturer selects the evidence that best exemplifies the learner's performance on a broad range of content. As well as exams, the teacher/lecturer includes a classroom assessment as it assesses skills not assessed as deeply elsewhere.

Evidence	Grade/Mark
Mock exam (Oct 20)	D
Classroom summative assessment (Dec 20)	24/25
Past Paper Unit 1 (May 21)	D
Past Paper Unit 2 (May 21)	D

Stage 3: When evaluating the evidence, the teacher/lecturer places more weight on the learner's performance in the mock exam and the past papers as they are confident that the learner has not received any support. The mock exam and the past papers had published notional grade boundaries, so that gives the teacher/lecturer confidence in the grade awarded.

Stage 4: The teacher/lecturer notes that the class was taught all the content being assessed and there were no issues with access arrangements for this learner.

Stage 5: The teacher/lecturer uses the grade descriptors and exemplars to support their judgement, and taking all the evidence into account, awards the learner a **grade D**.

Learner 2

Stage 2: The teacher/lecturer selects the evidence that best exemplifies the learner's performance across the specification.

Evidence	Grade/Mark
Classroom summative assessment (Oct 20)	17/30
Mock exam (Nov 20)	B
NEA (Feb 21)	C
Past paper Unit 1 (April 21)	C
Adapted past paper Unit 2 (May 21)	C

Stage 3: When evaluating the evidence, the teacher/lecturer is confident that all the pieces of evidence are the learner's authentic work. It is noted that several of the pieces of evidence have published and notional grade boundaries, so these are used to assign grades where relevant.

Stage 4: This learner has been able to participate in lessons consistently since the beginning of the first lockdown. The teacher/lecturer is confident that the learner has been taught all the content assessed and received sufficient support with NEA task, as defined in the specification.

Stage 5: The teacher/lecturer uses the grade descriptors and exemplars to support the judgement, and taking all the evidence into account, decides to award a **grade C**.

Learner 3

Stage 2: The teacher/lecturer selects evidence that best exemplifies the learner's performance in the different aspects of the specification. As this is a performance-based subject, marks the learner achieved in classroom assessments are averaged. The NEA is partially completed, due to lockdown, but the teacher uses the mark scheme and the guidance produced by us for incomplete NEA to award an appropriate mark. The teacher decides to assess the written paper by setting a centre designed task, using our guidance.

Evidence	Grade/Mark
Mock exam (Nov 20)	C
Classroom performance marks (Sept – Dec 20)	80 marks – average across tasks
Partially completed NEA (March 21)	B
Centre designed assessment (May 21)	C

Stage 3: When evaluating the evidence, the teacher/lecturer is confident that the learner's work is authentic. As NEA is heavily weighted in this subject the teacher places particular emphasis on this piece of evidence and on the classroom performance marks, which assess the same skills as the NEA.

Stage 4: The teacher/lecturer is confident that the learner has been taught all the content assessed in the tasks included.

Stage 5: The teacher/lecturer uses the grade descriptors and exemplars to support the judgement, and taking all the evidence into account, decides to award a **grade B**.

Learner 4

Stage 2: The teacher/lecturer selects the evidence that best exemplifies the learner's performance across the specification.

Evidence collected:

Evidence	Grade/Mark
NEA (adapted) (Nov 20)	A*
Adapted past paper Unit 2 (April 21)	B
Adapted past paper Unit 3 (May 21)	A

Stage 3: The teacher/lecturer is confident that the learner didn't have any additional support with the tasks completed so weights them with reference to the unit weightings in the specification, where two written papers far outweigh the NEA.

Stage 4: The teacher/lecturer is confident that the learner was taught all the content assessed in the tasks included and has been provided with their approved access arrangements.

Stage 5: The teacher/lecturer uses the grade descriptors and exemplars to support the judgement, and taking all the evidence into account, decides to award a **grade A**.

Learner 5

Stage 2: The teacher/lecturer collected the evidence that the learner completed, but due to ongoing issues, the learner has been unable to complete any further assessments since January 2021. Due to these exceptional circumstances, the teacher/lecturer gathers as much as evidence as they can so that the learner is not disadvantaged and can receive a centre determined grade.

Evidence collected:

Evidence	Grade/Mark
Class summative assessment (Sept 20)	6/15
Classwork summative assessment (Oct 20)	9/30
Mock exam (Nov 20)	E
Topic Test (Dec 20)	12/20

Stage 3: When evaluating the evidence, the teacher/lecturer is confident that the learner's work is authentic for three of the assessments. As the topic test was completed with access to range of resources and possible collaboration with other learners, it is given a lower weighting.

Stage 4: The teacher/lecturer is confident that the learner was taught all the content assessed in the tasks included but notes that the learner did not have their approved access arrangement for the first class summative assessment, nor the topic test completed in December.

Stage 5: The teacher/lecturer uses the evidence gathered from the rest of the class to support the judgement for this learner. The teacher/lecturer compares the marks recorded for the same tasks for other learners with the grades given, based on the evidence collected. On this basis an **E grade** is awarded.

Learner 6

Stage 2: The teacher/lecturer reviews the evidence available for this learner, and notes that the learner has completed one NEA task and has partially completed the second NEA task. The learner found it hard to engage with the written element of the qualification. They did not complete any written tasks prior to second lockdown. Due to personal circumstances the learner did not return to school in the summer term.

Evidence collected:

Evidence	Grade/Mark
NEA unit 1 (Oct 20)	B
NEA unit 2 (Dec 20)	D

Stage 3: The teacher/lecturer is confident that the learner completed the NEA in line with the specification requirements. The NEA units both make a significant contribution to the overall weighting of the qualification.

Stage 4: The teacher/lecturer is confident that the learner was taught all the content assessed in the NEA tasks.

Stage 5: The teacher/lecturer uses the grade descriptors and exemplars to support the judgement, and taking the two NEA units completed into account, and the fact there is no evidence to support an outcome for the written unit, decides to award a **grade D**.