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5. Student guide to awarding: summer 2021 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/student-guide-to-awarding-summer-2021>)

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Guidance

Easy-read: student guide to exams in summer 2021

Updated 25 May 2021

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This easy-read document is designed for people who may find it difficult to understand the standard version of our guide. What is described here will not be as legally precise as the standard guide and therefore cannot be relied upon when interpreting our requirements.

Introduction



Students have been affected by the pandemic and many exams and assessments have been cancelled this year.

We think it is important you can show what you know and can do. This will help you to move to your next school or college, or to university, or get a job.

This guide tells you:

- how you will get your qualifications in summer 2021
- where you can get more information

General qualifications



This information is important for all students in England who are taking the following qualifications:

- GCSEs (including short course GCSEs)
- AS and A levels
- Project Qualifications (L1, L2 and EPQ)
- Advanced Extension Awards (AEA) in maths

International GCSEs and International A levels are not included. For information on these qualifications, please contact the right exam board for your qualification.

How you can get GCSEs, AS and A levels in summer 2021

Your grade will be decided in these ways



- Your teachers will give you a grade based on your work. Your head of department and your headteacher or principal will check these grades, then send them to the exam board.
- School and college tests and other work can continue. Your school or college will tell you when to do these test and projects.
- You will only be tested on what your teacher has taught you.
- Your school or college will tell you which pieces of your work will be used to decide your grade.
- Your school or college won't tell you what grade your teacher gave you.
- If you're a private candidate, studying outside school or college, you can work with a school, college or other exam centre. They will tell you which pieces of your work will be used to decide your grade.

Evidence (showing what you can do)

- To show what you can do, you may have to take tests or show work you have already done.
- Your should continue to do your coursework (also known as 'non-exam assessment' or 'NEA').
- Your coursework can be used to show what you can do, even if you have not finished it.
- If you study art & design, your teacher will only look at the work in your portfolio.
- Your school or college can ask you to answer questions written by exam boards if they want.
- Your school or college and the exam boards will check that everyone follows the guidance. This is called 'quality assurance'.

Results

- **AS and A Level results day:** 10th August
- **GCSE results day:** 12th August

Appeals

When you get your results, if you think your grade is wrong you can 'make an appeal' (ask for your grade to be checked). First you should speak to your school or college to get their advice. You can get more information from your school, college or exam board.

Private candidates



Private candidates are students who do not study in a school or college. For example, students studying alone, students studying at home, and students who are studying alone to re-take a qualification.

If you are a private candidate studying for GCSEs, AS or A levels, you will need to work with a school, college or another exam centre. The school, college or exam centre will work with you to get evidence to decide your grade. The evidence you need will be the same sort of evidence as other students who have studied with a school or college.

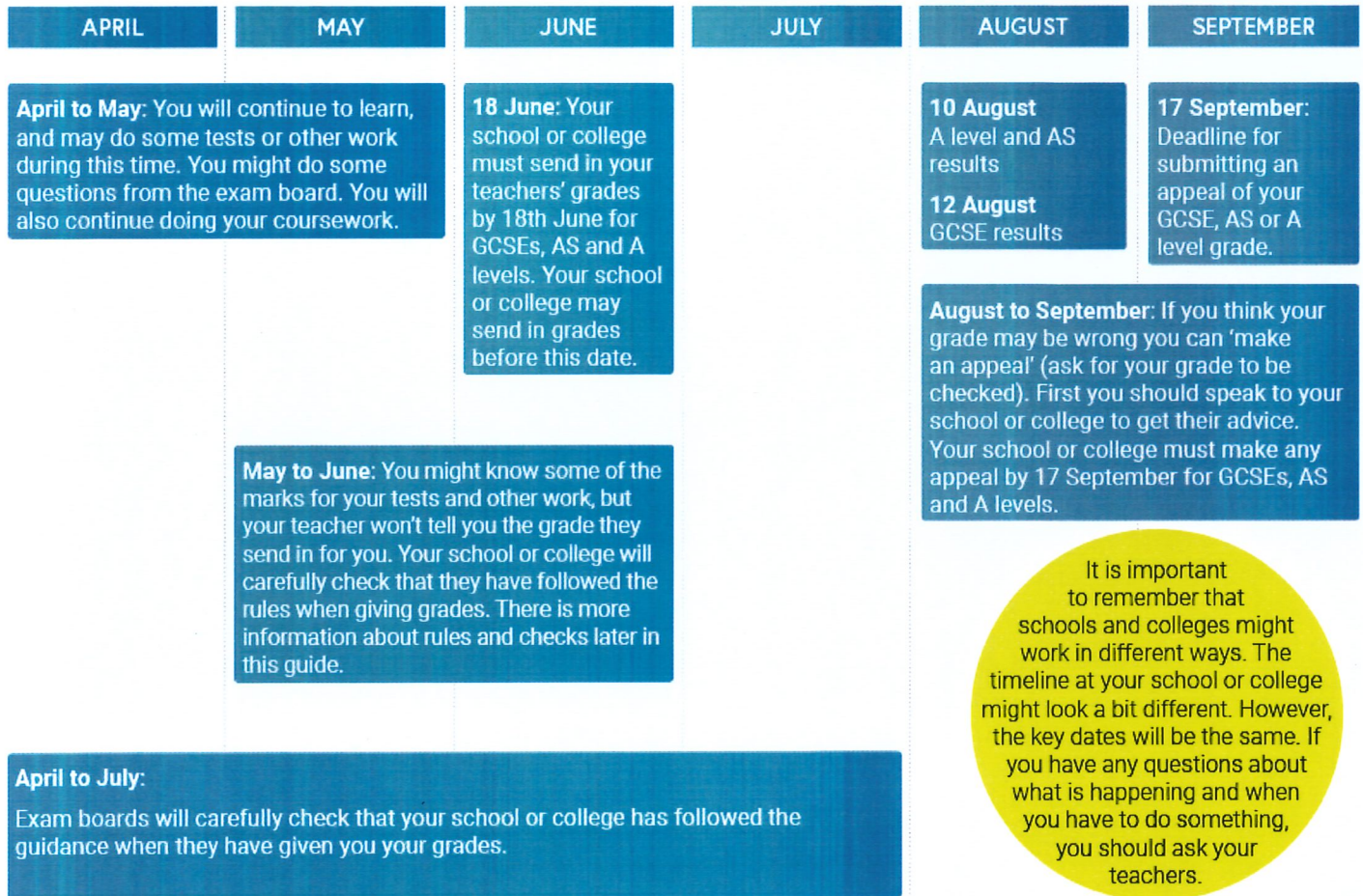
The school, college or exam centre will tell you how they collect evidence and grade students' work. The way they do this will also be checked by the exam boards.

If you have not found a school, college or other exam centre to work with, Jcq has written a list of schools and colleges who will work with private candidates (<https://www.jcq.org.uk/private-candidates-summer-2021/>). You could also work with a school or college not on this list if it agrees to help you.

The exam boards have written guidance for schools and colleges that accept private candidates (https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/JCQ_Interim-Guidance-for-Private-Candidate-Centres.pdf).

UCAS has more information for private candidates (<https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/after-you-apply/advice-private-candidates-summer-2021>), which you may find helpful.

Timelines – when things will happen



April to May

You will continue to learn, and may do some tests or other work during this time. You might do some questions from the exam board. You will also continue doing your coursework.

May to June

You might know some of the marks for your tests and other work, but your teacher won't tell you the grade they send in for you. Your school or college will carefully check that they have followed the rules when giving grades. There is more information about rules and checks later in this guide.

18 June

Your school or college must send in your teachers' grades by 18th June for GCSEs, AS and A levels. Your school or college may send in grades before this date.

April to July

Exam boards will carefully check that your school or college has followed the guidance when they have given you your grades.

August: Results days

- 10 August: AS & A levels
- 12 August: GCSEs

August to September

If you think your grade may be wrong you can 'make an appeal' (ask for your grade to be checked). First you should speak to your school or college to get their advice. Your school or college must make any appeal by 17th September for GCSEs, AS and A levels.

It is important to remember that schools and colleges might work in different ways. The timeline at your school or college might look a bit different. However, the key dates will be the same. If you have any questions about what is happening and when you have to do something, you should ask your teachers.

Evidence (showing what you can do)



What

- Your teachers will decide your grade by looking at your work, but they will only look at work on things that they have taught you.

- Your teachers might look at work you have done such as mock exam results, homework or in-class tests.
- Your coursework can also be used to show what you can do, even if you haven't finished it.
- Exam boards have given materials to help schools, colleges and other exam centres prepare your tests. These include questions and mark schemes. Your school or college may choose to use these to help decide your grade.

When

- Your school or college will be able to use any work or tests you have done during your course to help decide your grade.
- If you cannot attend school or college because you are shielding or isolating (staying home to keep yourself or your family safe), you should tell your school or college. They will think about other ways you can show what you have learned.
- Your school or college can't tell you the grade they will give you before results day. They should tell you which pieces of your work they are using to decide your grade.

Extra time or other changes (often called 'reasonable adjustments')

If you usually have extra time or other changes when you take a test or exam, your school or college should think about what you need for any tests they give you. If some of your work was done without these changes, your teachers should remember this when deciding your grade. If you are worried, you should talk to someone at your school or college.

How grades will be decided in GCSE, AS or A level art & design

Your teacher will decide your grade using only your portfolio of work. If you could not finish your portfolio (and it was not your fault), you should not get a lower grade.

Results for practical skills or spoken language skills

You will receive a separate grade or result for the spoken language or practical skills in these subjects:

- GCSE English language
- GCSE modern foreign languages
- A level sciences (biology, chemistry, physics)
- A level geology

Your grade will be based on the work you have done.

Foundation tier

Your school or college will give you a grade that matches the tier you have been entered for. If you are taking a subject at foundation tier, your grade will not be above 5. This is the same as any other year. You should talk to your teacher if you're not sure what tier you are entered for.

Coursework

You should try to finish your coursework in the way that your teachers told you. This will help your teachers decide your grade. But if you can't finish it (and it was not your fault) you should not get a lower grade. Your teachers will look at what you were able to complete and might still use it to help decide your grade.

Which pieces of my work my teacher will use

Your school or college will decide which pieces of work or tests they use to decide what grade they will give you. You cannot decide which pieces of evidence they will use. Your school or college should try to use the same types of work for everyone in your class. The work will be different for each subject. Your school or college will tell you which pieces of work they will use to decide your grade, before they send your grade to the exam board. You will have the chance to talk about any worries with your school or college.

It is really important that you and your parents or carers don't try to make teachers give higher grades than your work should get. Headteachers and principals have been asked to write down times when this happens. Exam boards may check such cases to see if anyone has behaved badly.

Other things my teacher might need to think about

If someone recently died in your family or there were other things that might have changed how well you did your work, you should talk about this with your school or college.

Use of exam board tasks

Your school or college will decide how to use the exam board tasks. Your school or college will tell you how to complete any tasks.

Quality assurance (how grades are checked)



Your school or college must follow the guidance when deciding and sending in grades and the exams boards will also check the guidance is being followed. This is called 'quality assurance'.

Each school or college will say how it will follow the guidance and assess its students and give them grades this year. This is called their centre policy. The exam board will check every school and college's approach before grades are sent in.

Your school or college will also check that your work has been graded correctly. They might:

- check that different teachers are giving the same grade for the same quality of work
- ask another teacher to check how your work has been marked

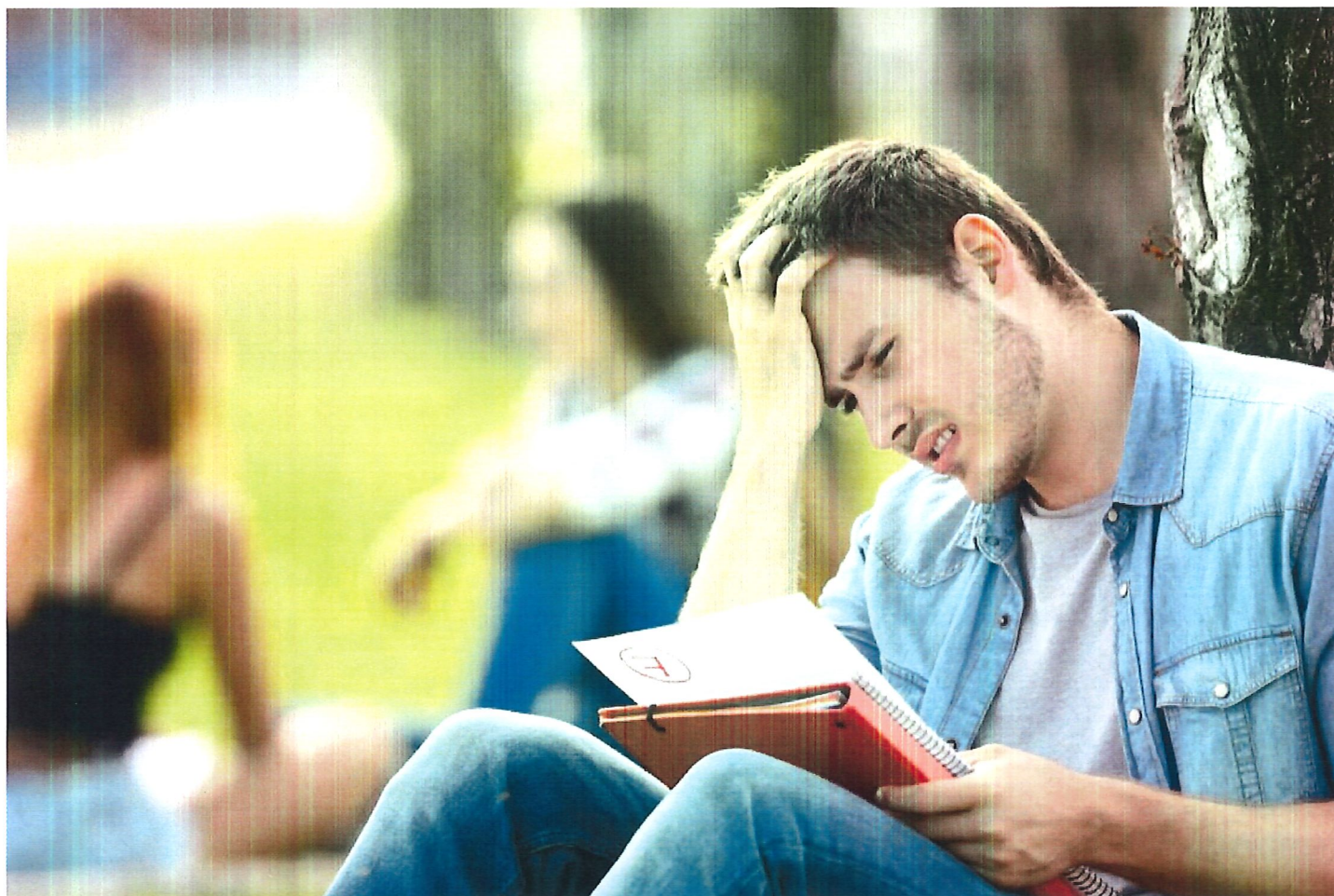
Your headteacher or principal will write to the exam board to say that the school has followed the guidance when deciding your grade.

After the exam boards receive the teachers' grades they will ask every school or college to send them samples of students' work. Experts in each subject will look at the work sent in by some of the schools and colleges. They will:

- look at a mixture of work from different schools and colleges in different places
- check some students' work from new schools and colleges that might need more help
- check some students' work from schools and colleges where results are very different to other years

Exam boards will check that schools and colleges have made good decisions when deciding grades. If the exam board thinks decisions are wrong, they will ask the school or college to check and, if necessary, to send in new grades. Exam boards will not send out results until they are sure the results are correct.

What to do if you think your grade is wrong



Appeals

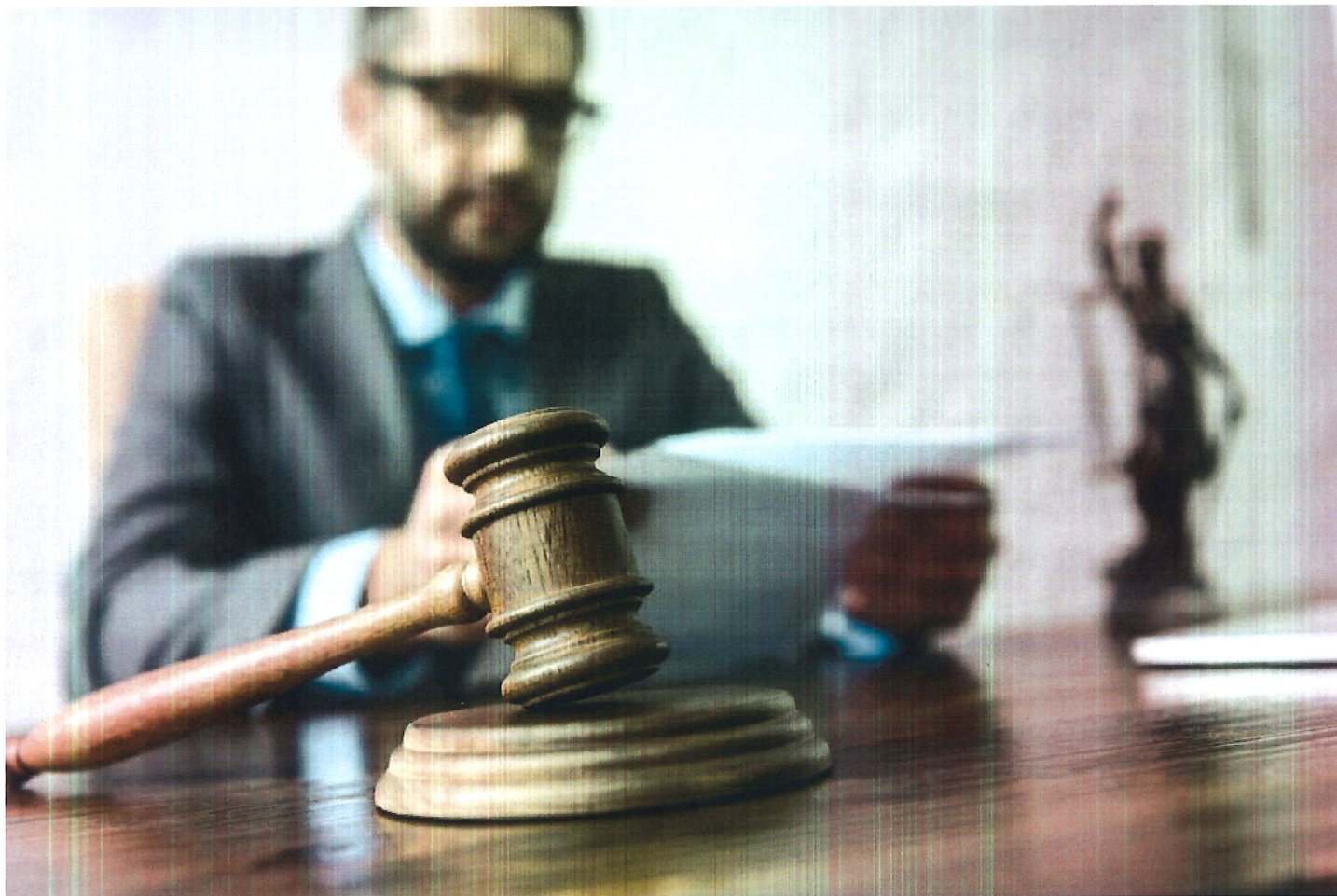
Your teacher should have received training and support to help them decide your grade. The decisions they make will be carefully checked.

Every year there are students who are not happy with the grade they get. You might be able to take exams in the autumn to improve your grade.

If you are worried that your grade is wrong, you can challenge it through the 'appeals process'. If you appeal, your grade could go up, down, or stay the same.

You must ask your school or college to make any appeal to the exam board by 17 September.

To challenge your grade



1. If you think your grade is wrong, first ask your school or college to check whether it made a mistake in deciding or sending in your grade.
2. If your school or college finds a mistake, they can send a new grade to the exam board. The exam board will decide what to do.
3. If your school or college doesn't find a mistake but you still believe that your grade is wrong, you can ask your school or college to make an 'appeal' to the exam board for you.

You can challenge your grade for these reasons:

- the school or college did not follow its policy when it decided your grade
 - the school or college made an unreasonable decision when deciding which tests or pieces of work to use to decide your grade
 - the school or college made an unreasonable decision about what grade you should get for the work it used to decide your grade
4. The exam board will decide if your school or college followed its own policy and will look at the work used to decide your grade.
 5. If the exam board decides that your grade is wrong, or they find there was a mistake which affected the grade, they may change the grade. Your new grade could be higher or lower than the grade you were given on results day.
 6. The exam board may decide that you were given the correct grade, and that your school or college followed the correct rules.
 7. If you are still worried and think that the exam board has not followed its own rules to carry out the appeal, you can use Ofqual's Exam Procedure Review Service. Ofqual can decide if the exam board

followed the rules. Ofqual will not decide what grade you should get. The exam board might change your grade if Ofqual finds it made a mistake.

Important things to remember

1. Teachers will tell you the pieces of work they are using to decide your grades before they send your grades to the exam boards.
2. Your school and college will check your grades. Exam boards will check the way your school or college is grading, and will check samples of grades from different schools and colleges.
3. When the exam board checks a grade, it will check if the teacher's decision was 'reasonable'.
4. A grade will only be changed for two reasons. First, the teacher or school or college made a mistake when deciding or sending the grade. Second, your grade was the wrong grade for the work you did and the tests you took.
5. Most students have no problems with their grades. However, we have an 'appeals process' to help you if something goes wrong.
6. Your school or college should make an appeal for you if you ask for one. If you're worried that your school or college won't submit an appeal for you, please contact the exam board for your qualification.
7. When you make an appeal, you will need to explain why you think your result was wrong and should be changed.
8. If you appeal, your grade can go up, down, or stay the same.
9. If you think your school or college did something wrong when deciding your grade, you should first discuss this with them.
10. If you can show they did something wrong when they decided or sent off your grade, you may want to contact your exam board directly instead.

Autumn exams



There will be exams in October for AS and A levels, and in November and December for GCSEs. You can take exams for all GCSE and A level subjects. You can take AS exams in biology, chemistry, physics, maths and further maths. Exam boards may offer AS exams in other subjects. You should check with your exam board whether they will provide exams for any other subjects at AS.

The exams will be in a normal format and they will be the same as they would have been in summer 2021. This includes asking questions on a smaller number of topics than usual for GCSE English literature, history and ancient history.

Students who normally have extra time or other changes in exams (known as reasonable adjustments) will get those changes for these exams.

In the autumn exams, for all subjects except art & design, your grade will be decided only by exams. You will not do coursework. Art & design will be assessed by a task that will be set and marked by your exam board. Your grade will be decided by how well you do on this task. There will be no exam for art & design.

You can take exams in the autumn if your teacher decided your grade for that subject in summer 2021. You can also take an exam if you were planning to take an exam in the summer before they were cancelled. This includes students not studying in a school or college for their exams.

If you get a higher grade in your autumn exam than you get this summer, then you can ask the exam board to give you a new certificate showing your higher grade.

Vocational and technical qualifications



How you can get vocational and technical qualifications in summer 2021

Qualifications most similar to GCSEs and A levels that are used to enter a university or college

For example: BTECs, OCR Cambridge Technicals or Core Maths

Your results will be:

- decided by a teacher or lecturer
- based on evidence of your performance, such as course work and any tasks or exams completed
- given out no later than GCSEs and A levels

Other qualifications that can help you go to college, but which are different from GCSEs or A levels

For example, Functional Skills and ESOL Skills for Life. These exams do not check if you can do a job. You take these exams when you are ready.

You should be able to continue taking exams and coursework for these qualifications.

If students cannot take the exam safely, your result can be decided by a teacher. In this case your results will be:

- decided by a teacher or lecturer

- based on evidence of your performance, such as course work and any tasks or exams completed
- given out at the usual times

Qualifications which test if you can do a task or job



For example, construction, plumbing and electrical qualifications.

These tests:

- can continue as normal where possible
- can be slightly changed if necessary
- may be delayed

You will get your results at the usual times, after you have taken your test.

You can use Ofqual's qualification explainer tool to learn how you will get your qualification in 2021.

You can find more information about each qualification on the website of the organisation that gives out your qualification. You can also learn how you will be tested and what work you must complete.

How you can get vocational, technical and other general qualifications this summer

We understand that the pandemic has made it more difficult for students to get vocational and technical qualifications and other general qualifications.

Many students have missed teaching and learning during lockdowns. This means not all students have studied all the information they need to know (especially students on 2-year courses).

Our plans should help you to still get a qualification and progress to another course or a job.

Qualifications that are similar to GCSEs, AS or A levels and used to enter a university or college

Are you studying for a qualification that is like a GCSE, AS or A level, or taken with GCSEs, AS or A levels? Is it used in a similar way to enter a university or college? If so, a teacher can give you a grade and this can be part or all of your result.

This means your teacher or lecturer will look at your work and give you a grade. This work might be any exams or projects you have already completed. They might also look at tasks you will complete in early summer. Decisions by teachers and lecturers will be checked by your college, training provider or school. They will also be checked by the organisation that gives out your qualification before you get your result.

Examples of these types of qualification are BTECs (Pearson) and OCR Cambridge Technicals, in subjects such as business, digital media, and health and social care.

For some of these qualifications, you need to show skill at a job (even if the whole course is not about job training). If so, you probably still need to finish some of your coursework so you can get a qualification result. Your college, training provider or school will know if you need to do this.

You should receive your results at the same time as GCSEs, AS and A levels results.

Other qualifications that help you move to your next college or a job, but which are different from GCSEs or A levels



From college

To a job



Some qualifications help you move to your next college or a job but are different from GCSEs or A levels. You take them when you are ready. For example, you might study Functional Skills and ESOL Skills for Life. There are 3 ways you can take these tests.

1. In a college or training provider, workplace, school, or somewhere else, where it is safe to take the test, following Covid-19 rules.
2. Online in many different places, including at home.
3. If the test can't be done in a safe place or online, and you need a result to move to your next college or a job, then a teacher may be able to give you a grade. Your teacher or lecturer will decide this grade by looking at the work you have done and how well you did it.

Because of these plans, you should be able to move to your next college or a job and not be delayed. It will also help if you need a Functional Skills qualification to finish your apprenticeship. Speak to your college, training provider or school for more information.

Qualifications that ask you to show skill at a job or task



Are you studying for a qualification that asks you to show skill at a job or task? Then you will need to be tested on your practical skills or knowledge before you can get your certificate and start a job.

Exams or coursework for these qualifications should continue where possible. They may be a bit different to normal. You may be given a remote online test, or other changes may be made to the test. Your test may have to be delayed until it can be done safely, following COVID-19 rules.

Examples of these types of qualifications are plumbing, accountancy, performing arts graded exams, construction, and veterinary work.

These plans should help you to get the results you need to move to your next course or a job.

Arrangements for private candidates

- Organisations that give qualifications must try to include private candidates in their plans.
- If you are a private candidate and you can't find a place to take your test, contact the organisation that gives out your qualification (e.g. City & Guilds). They will give you the details of a place that can help you.

Learners who took, or had a chance to take, January exams

- Is your vocational or technical qualification like a GCSE, AS or A level? Were you absent from January exams? Or did you take an exam, but feel that you did badly because of the pandemic and the most recent lockdown? Your teacher may still be able to give you a grade.
- Talk to your college, training provider or school about what can be done to help you.