

Awarding Qualifications and Assessment Arrangements for 2021

The continuing pandemic has led to some exams and assessments being cancelled in 2021. The Department for Education and Ofqual conducted a joint consultation on 'Alternative arrangements for the award of VTQs and other general qualifications in 2021'.

As an outcome of the consultation on 25th February the government announced the policy and scope of awarding vocational and technical qualifications in 2021.

It was confirmed that:

- Alternative arrangements to written exams (similar to those being proposed for GCSEs, AS and A levels) are needed for those VTQs and other general qualifications most like GCSEs, AS and A levels. Many of these were subject to calculated results last summer, and it is likely that some form of teacher assessment will be most appropriate.
- Assessments for on-demand qualifications, such as Functional Skills or ESOL Skills for Life, can go ahead if in line with PHE guidance. Where learners are unable to access FSQ assessments, an alternative method of awarding these qualifications is needed to ensure these learners can progress.
- Where qualifications are used to demonstrate occupational or professional competency or proficiency or to gain a licence to practise are necessary, then these assessments for these qualifications should continue when this is possible, subject to PHE guidance.

VTQ Contingency Regulatory Framework (VCRF)

Ofqual has put in place the Vocational Contingency Regulatory Framework (VCRF) for Awarding Organisations (AOs) offering VTQs. The VCRF is currently in draft form and subject to consultation ending on the 11th March. These regulatory arrangements will enable AOs to be sufficiently flexible to support as many learners as possible to complete qualifications, whilst still retaining the integrity of their qualifications. The VCRF will allow for assessments to be taken as normal, using agreed adaptations, or where necessary for alternative assessment arrangements. Arrangements will vary according to the types of qualification and how they are delivered and assessed.

For qualifications most important for progression to further study or employment, the framework enables AOs to:

- make awards when exams do not take place and/or not all internal assessments have been completed;
- determine the most appropriate approach to awarding based on their qualification design and delivery;
- determine what the minimum assessment evidence should be, so that valid and reliable qualifications are awarded; this should include consideration of completed assessments.

For qualifications that demonstrate occupational skills/competency or act as a licence to practice, Ofqual proposes the approach and adaptations permitted under the Extended ERF continue to remain appropriate. This is necessary to ensure that employers can have confidence in the knowledge, skills and understanding of learners achieving these qualifications and are competent to operate in the workplace.

Qualification categories defined in the VCRF

Category A Qualifications

- Qualifications which signal occupational or professional competency, proficiency or act as a licence to practice.
- Results can only be awarded when assessments have taken place.
- Assessments may be made available as normal or with adaptations.
- Some assessments may be delayed where necessary to comply with public health guidance.

Category B Qualifications

- Qualifications which are important for progression to further or higher study or into employment where the issue of results should be prioritised.
- Results can be awarded when not all assessments have taken place, including through the use of Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs).
- For qualifications which are not similar to GCSE's, AS or A Levels, the starting point is that learners should sit assessments where safe to do so, remotely or in person before receiving an award through the use of alternative evidence, including Teacher Assessed Grades.

Within the draft VCRF, there are two different sets of principles for the two groups of qualifications.

BPEC will shortly be confirming the category of all BPEC qualifications that fall in-scope. It's expected that the majority of BPEC qualifications will fall within category A.

Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs)

BPEC detailed guidance on the TAG process, trusted evidence types and minimum requirements, and related quality assurance requirements will be published in the coming weeks, around late March/early April. Centres will need to start considering what learners have completed within qualifications and what is missing, before collecting evidence to support their assessment. Teachers should look to gather a wide range of evidence to support their assessments on qualifications where this may be applied, but is not limited to:

- Units/Assessments that have already been externally quality assured by BPEC (during EQA process).
- Successful completion of externally set, externally marked online exams.
- Assessments completed and internally quality assured, but not externally quality assured by BPEC.
- Assessments completed, but not internally quality assured.
- Quality assurance records and tracking.
- Assessments partially completed (primary practical assessment successfully completed but supplementary not complete).
- Previous examination results or assessment outcomes, for example any re-sitting learners or those who have completed similar qualifications.
- Outcomes of centre assignment tasks.
- Any formative or practice exam/assessment results.
- Participation and performance in skills-based activities.
- Overall learner performance and progress, including level of attendance.
- Tutor or Assessor assessment tracking records and individual learning plans/progress reviews.

- Any other records of learner performance over the course of study.

Qualifications where teacher assessed grades won't play a part in awarding

Occupational Qualifications/ Qualifications used as a Licence to Practise/Professional Qualifications

Approach to assessment and awarding: Adaptations already introduced can continue under the VCRF.

Qualifications where teacher assessed grades will play a part in awarding:

- VTQs/Other General qualifications, most like GCSEs, AS and A levels, which are important for progression to further/higher study or employment, such as: Applied General qualifications, Tech awards, Core maths.
- VTQs that are important for progression to further/higher study or employment, but which include some assessment of occupational skills, such as: some Tech levels, other VRQs.

Approach to assessment and awarding: For those VTQs most similar to GCSEs, AS and A levels, AOs are expected to take similar approaches to those used for those qualifications including the use of teacher judgement, appeals and measures for private candidates.

- VTQs that are important for progression to further study or employment, but which are not delivered in the same way as GQs and don't share all the same key characteristics, such as: Functional Skills Qualifications (FSQs) and ESOL Skills for Life.

Approach to assessment and awarding: Assessments may continue where viable but where learners can receive a result through a teacher assessed grade where they cannot access an assessment.

Next Steps

It is important that teaching, learning and assessment continue where possible to support learners and engagement in education.

BPEC will shortly be confirming the category of all BPEC qualifications that fall in-scope.

Now that the directive and consultation responses have been published, the further technical consultation has commenced which will lead to the publishing of the framework Ofqual will use to regulate qualifications under these arrangements. BPEC will take the conditions and requirements from this framework and publish guidance for centres which aligns to the framework and its key principles. The BPEC Centre Guidance is expected to be released late March / early April.

Contact Us

BPEC will be publishing further detailed guidance to centres in due course, in the interim period for any questions or queries please email aoadmin@bpec.org.uk