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News story

Awarding vocational and technical qualifications this summer

Calculated results for qualifications used for progression to higher and further education. Arrangements for other qualifications to be issued after Easter.

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From:

Ofqual (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofqual>)



The period since the Secretary of State for Education announced exams and assessments would be cancelled this summer to help fight the spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19) has been unsettling for all students and learners, including those taking vocational and technical courses.

We welcome the direction the Education Secretary has issued to Ofqual today (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/direction-issued-to-the-chief-regulator-of-ofqual>) (9 April 2020), which sets out how the government expects vocational and technical qualifications to be assessed and awarded in the coming weeks and months.

We recognise students taking qualifications, alongside or instead of GCSEs, AS and A levels, to progress to further or higher education urgently need to know what arrangements will be put in place for them. We have worked closely with the Department for Education, awarding organisations and regulators in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland to develop our approach and are today confirming that these qualifications will be awarded a calculated result (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/awarding-qualifications-in-summer-2020>).

Learners due to take assessments for Functional Skills qualifications before the end of the summer will also receive a calculated result.

Sally Collier, Chief Regulator, Ofqual, said:

The wide range of young people and adults taking vocational, technical or other general qualifications to progress to further or higher education can be reassured that they will not be disadvantaged against their peers taking GCSEs or A levels – and that results will be issued fairly and in time for them to move on as planned.

The complexity of the landscape for vocational and technical qualifications means a single approach is not appropriate.

Calculated results will draw on a range of evidence, depending on the structure of the qualification. They may be based in part on teacher, trainer or tutor judgements of the result each learner would most likely have achieved had they been able to complete their assessments in summer 2020. Any centre assessment grade will be based on a range of evidence held by the school, college or training provider. Depending on the structure of the qualification, centres may be asked to provide a centre assessment grade for the whole qualification, or for uncompleted modules or units. There might be some instances where they are asked to provide a rank order of learners (as with GCSEs, AS and A levels). Where appropriate, statistical techniques based on students' results in previous years, on these and on their academic qualifications, will form part of the adopted approach.

The awarding organisation offering the qualification will use any centre assessment grade, combined with other relevant information (such as marks for completed assessments in some modules or units), to determine the most appropriate calculated result. Our aim is for students to receive results alongside outcomes for GCSEs, AS and A levels.

We are working with awarding organisations to finalise a list of qualifications that we will advise the Secretary of State should be in scope for learners to receive a calculated result. It will include many BTEC Nationals, Cambridge Technicals, and UAL Diplomas as well as general qualifications such as the International Baccalaureate, Cambridge Pre-U and qualifications included under the umbrella term 'Core Maths'.

We are discussing the process for generating calculated results with awarding organisations, who will provide detailed information to their centres in the coming days and weeks.

Some qualifications are primarily designed to support progression to or through employment, rather than to further or higher education or to an apprenticeship. We are working with awarding organisations to identify qualifications in this group where it might still be possible to generate a calculated result. Where this is not possible, we will encourage awarding organisations to adapt assessments or delivery models (for example, changing invigilation requirements or moving to

remote moderation) as long as this does not undermine the reliability of the result and only where assessments can take place within the current social distancing rules. In some cases, where qualifications directly signal occupational competence or function as a licence to practise, it may not be safe or meet employers' requirements to do either of these, and there may be no option but to wait until normal assessments can take place again.

We are working closely with awarding organisations to finalise the lists of qualifications in scope for each category (the award of calculated results; adaptation of assessments; and rescheduling). We will set out after Easter further details of the approach for each category, and to outline those areas where we will need to consult.

Our overriding priority for all qualifications is to develop a process which is applied fairly and consistently, so that standards are maintained and all those who use qualifications can continue to have confidence in their value.

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