

Guidance on the teacher assessed grades process

Version 1.0

31 March 2021

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1. Introduction

a) Outcome of the Department for Education and Ofqual consultation

In the joint Department for Education (DfE) and Ofqual consultation on the alternative arrangements for the award of vocational and technical qualifications (VTQs), it was decided that there would be three broad groups of VTQs with different approaches to awarding in 2021.

The third group includes small qualifications taken for mixed purposes that are unlike GCSEs and A levels in their qualification and assessment structure. Functional Skills qualifications are in this group. For this group of qualifications, exams and assessments are to continue where they can be delivered in line with PHE measures or remotely. Alternative arrangements are in place for those who cannot safely access assessments or take them remotely.

The DfE and Ofqual set out that:

“...Functional Skills, have ‘on-demand’ shorter assessments. Where these can be delivered in line with public health measures, including remotely, the Department’s policy position is that they should be permitted to continue to proceed. This is to ensure that students and other learners can continue to progress fairly and acknowledges that providers have been implementing protective measures and adapting assessments such as moving to remote assessment.”

“These qualifications are often taken on demand, with more frequent external examination and assessment opportunities throughout the year, and we do not see a strong rationale for preventing these assessments from continuing where they can be delivered in line with public health guidelines. For students and other learners who are unable to access FSQ assessments, an alternative method of awarding these qualifications may be needed to ensure these learners can progress.”

All the FSQ Awarding Organisations have collaborated on a joint set of principles for using alternative arrangements to award results through teacher assessed grades this summer. The principles will ensure we each take an approach to awarding results that are as consistent as possible. A joint statement, which includes the principles, has been published on behalf of the FSQ AOs and is available [here](#).

In this document, we have set out our approach for the awarding of FSQs this summer in the context of how our Functional Skills qualifications are delivered and assessed. We have also taken into consideration that our Legacy Level 1 and Level 2 English and maths Functional Skills qualifications will expire on 21 May 2021.

b) OCR’s approach for teacher assessed grades in Functional Skills

This document sets out what the TAG approach will be for OCR’s Functional Skills qualifications. These are:

- Legacy Functional Skills qualifications English and maths, Level 1 and Level 2*
- Functional Skills qualifications ICT, Entry Level 1–3, Level 1 and 2

*Legacy Functional Skills qualifications English and maths at Entry Level and Reformed Functional Skills qualifications English and maths all levels, have been withdrawn.

There is a multi-staged process that needs to be followed in order to request a Teacher Assessed Grade (TAG). These stages are outlined in detail later in this document, but below is a summary of the stages:

- Learner is ready to take the assessment
- Centre identifies learner(s) is unable to access a live test safely
- Centre applies to OCR to use a TAG for eligible learner(s)
- Centre implements a TAG approach in line with OCR's guidance
- Centre completes internal quality assurance process
- Centre submits a TAG to OCR
- OCR completes external quality assurance process
- OCR issues a TAG result(s).

This guidance is intended to help you to complete the process and ensure you have the right evidence to support your TAGs for individual learners.

Key terms:

Assessment – refers to the exam or internal assessment relevant to the component.

Teacher assessed grade (TAG) – the final outcome issued for a candidate by OCR when using this process.

Component – Maths and ICT FSQs only have one component at each level, however in English reading, writing and Speaking, Listening and Communication (SLC) are separate components.

Protected characteristics – are defined by the 2010 Equality Act as, age; disability; gender reassignment; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation; marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy and maternity.

2. Scope

a) Qualifications

This guidance covers teacher assessed grades for the following qualifications.

Legacy English & maths Functional Skills:

09498	OCR Functional Skills qualification in English at level 1	500/9111/6
09499	OCR Functional Skills qualification in English at level 2	500/8963/8
09865	OCR Functional Skills qualification in mathematics at level 1	500/8910/9
09866	OCR Functional Skills qualification in mathematics at level 2	500/8908/0

ICT Functional Skills:

09873	OCR Functional Skills qualification in information and communication technology (ICT) at Entry 1	500/8503/7
09874	OCR Functional Skills qualification in information and communication technology (ICT) at Entry 2	500/8502/5
09875	OCR Functional Skills qualification in Information and Communication technology (ICT) at Entry 3	500/8473/2
09876	OCR Functional Skills qualification in information and communication technology (ICT) at level 1	500/8505/0
09877	OCR Functional Skills qualification in Information and Communication technology (ICT) at level 2	500/8509/8

b) Eligibility

TAGS should be considered to be an exception rather than the 'norm' for Functional Skills qualifications. Live testing remains available throughout the period and must always be the primary option. Adaptations to delivering live tests have been made so you **must** explore and exhaust all these options. Therefore, eligibility for a learner to be **considered** for a TAG has to be clearly established, by you, **before** any supporting evidence is considered.

A learner who has completed all their learning and is ready to take the assessment, could be considered for a TAG application provided you can demonstrate that normal assessment arrangements are not safe and that the learner cannot:

- access an assessment face to face
- access an assessment utilising adaptation
- delay the assessment

A key part of the eligibility judgement must be a consideration of when each learner requires the result and, working back from the end date when the result is required, whether there is likely to be a clear opportunity for the learner to access a live test safely in any way before that date.

You will need to justify why each learner is eligible for a TAG providing evidence of the options you have explored to access live testing for each learner.

Where you can demonstrate that you have explored all possible options for each individual learner to take a live test/assessment, including all possible adaptations that have been put

in place, then you may proceed with an application to us to submit TAGs for each individual learner.

Private candidates should be assessed in a similar way and will be expected to meet the same requirements.

There is a timescale, known as a period of eligibility, by when assessment was due to take place. You have to be able to confirm assessment was due to take place:

- **between 1 August 2020 to 23 April 2021** for Legacy English and maths, Level 1 and Level 2
- **between 1 August 2020 to 31 August 2021** for ICT.

Evidence that demonstrates a learner's eligibility **must** be retained within your centre as we may need sight of this before being able to approve a TAG.

c) Component submissions

You must submit teacher assessed grades at the component level for each component the learner(s) cannot access.

FS Qualification	Component structure
Legacy English	Three separate components at each level <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading • Writing • Speaking, Listening and Communication (SLC)
Legacy Mathematics	Single component at each level.
ICT	Single component at each level

Teacher assessed grades required by subject:

- The following components are assessed by **exam**:
 - Maths Level 1 and 2
 - English Reading Level 1 and 2
 - English Writing Level 1 and 2
 - ICT Level 1 and 2
- The following components are assessed **internally**:
 - ICT all components at Entry Level
 - English – Speaking Listening and Communication at Level 1 and 2

TAGs are not available for maths and English entry levels, as these qualifications have been withdrawn.

d) Timelines

19 April 2021 to 21 May 2021	Request for TAGs submitted by centres for Legacy English and maths Level 1 and Level 2
19 April 2021 to 31 August 2021	Request for TAGs submitted by centres for ICT all levels
On-demand	Results release

The paperwork you will need to submit to request a TAG will be made available by 19 April 2021.

3. The teacher assessed grade process

a) Eligibility

You need to demonstrate that the normal assessment arrangements are not safe and that your learner cannot:

- access an assessment in person
- access an assessment using adaptations
- delay the assessment to a later date

We have made the following adaptations available to centres:

- Paper-based assessment window – centres can contact us if they need to keep paper-based exam papers for a longer period. For example, if a learner is self-isolating and will not be able to sit the exam in the allotted period.
- For Speaking, Listening and Communicating, at Level 1 and Level 2, centres can contact us if they need to complete this part of the assessment remotely through the use of video calls.

You must consider when your learner needs a result for their Functional Skills qualification. Will there be an opportunity for them to take a live assessment in a safe way before they need the result?

You will need to justify why each learner is eligible for a TAG and be able to give evidence of what options you have investigated and ruled out to enable a learner to complete the live assessment.

If you can show that you have looked into all possibilities for live testing, including using adaptations, then you will be able to submit an application for a TAG for your learner.

You will need to evidence the following:

Requirements for TAG application	Evidence to support TAG application
Reason why learner is eligible including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Why the learner cannot take a live test• Why the learner needs a result now• That the learner is assessment ready	Rationale from you must have: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clear evidence to demonstrate efforts to live test• Need for a result by a set date to support progression• Readiness for assessment between 1 August 2020 and 31 August 2021 for ICT• Readiness for assessment between 1 August 2020 and 23 April 2021 for English & maths

b) Learner evidence

You will need to have clear records in place which may be reviewed as part of our quality assurance processes. The records are to provide reassurance that the learners selected are eligible and any outcomes are robust and a true reflection of the learner's achievement.

Requirements for TAG application	Evidence to support TAG application
<p>Supporting evidence for the TAG:</p> <p>You must have a body of evidence that a teacher can use to form the basis of their TAG judgement</p>	<p>Recommended evidence includes, but is not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed practice paper taken as a mock assessment including details of the conditions under which it was taken • Formative assessment results • Previous live test/exam taken with result of Fail(n) – near pass. This must be supplemented with evidence that demonstrates the learner has improved since the result <p>This could be further supported by other evidence which may include, but is not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any other learner work towards the qualification (i.e. work they have independently undertaken in class or at home) • Learner work demonstrating the skills assessed by FS qualifications that has been completed in support of another qualification learning aim.
<p>Supporting the TAG:</p> <p>Using the evidence, the teacher can confirm that they believe the learner would have passed/achieved the assessment.</p>	<p>Evidence described above plus commentary from the teacher using agreed pass descriptors to demonstrate how the evidence aligns.</p>

While the use of a practice paper is not mandated, we **highly recommend** the use of this material as a key part of any supporting evidence, as these tests have been produced by the awarding organisation and are therefore seen as a standardised source of evidence.

Conditions for completion of the mock test will not be mandated, but the test used and the mark scheme applied must be an awarding organisation produced sample, practice or past paper made available by us for this purpose. We will provide clear guidance on the pass threshold to enable accurate assessment that will reflect the standards within the live assessments. This guidance will be provided by 19 April 2021.

The conditions for collating evidence are not mandated, but you will need to consider the conditions through which this evidence is gathered. You should implement measures to

ensure you are confident that the evidence is authentic to the learner, the evidence is reliable and comparable to those going through live assessments.

You must, therefore, record the conditions under which the evidence has been produced, and, where evidence has been produced without controls, you should include other supporting evidence to corroborate this to provide reassurances of the learner's overall ability to achieve the qualification and progress.

You are encouraged to discuss the evidence that will be used with each learner, so they know what is being presented as evidence for their TAG.

c) Internal quality assurance and sign off

You must make sure the decisions about a learner's ability are objective. You should refer to Ofqual's guidance 'Information for centres about making objective judgements' which can be found [here](#). This document provides guidance for centres on how to be aware of unconscious effects on objectivity and how to avoid possible bias.

For each TAG, you must follow an internal quality assurance process before the TAG is submitted which meets the requirements below:

Each TAG will be determined by a teacher. This judgement should then be internally quality assured by another staff member. This would ideally be the Head of Department, or someone who usually conducts the role of Internal Quality Assurer for Functional Skills. Where a staff member might have a personal interest in a learner (for example as a relative), Heads of Centre should make sure that additional controls are put in place, as appropriate.

Where more than one teacher is responsible for delivering a component within the centre and component, then these teachers must work together to standardise their judgements.

If one teacher is making the decision for a component, it would be good practice for them to ask a suitable colleague to sense-check their decision making as part of the centres internal process. This helps to check consistency of approach and ensure objectivity. Where a centre is making judgments across multiple components or qualifications, those making the judgments should be consistent in the process they follow, even if they are judging different subjects.

At the start of the process, teachers should individually consider the learner and make provisional judgements about whether they are ready to pass an assessment. Any candidates who are not felt to be ready to pass should not be put forward for a TAG.

The teachers should collaborate to discuss and compare the evidence used, and the judgement applied, so that they can agree on how they are judging the learner. As a result of this process, teachers may revisit judgements reached.

The teachers should then complete judgement for all learners. They may wish to continue to discuss any borderline decisions with colleagues as required.

Teachers must record **all** standardisation discussions/decisions. The centre must keep these records along with any other evidence used in the process of determining teacher assessed grades. The documents and evidence must be kept for a minimum of six months after results are released.

d) Head of Centre declaration

We will require a Head of Centre declaration to be signed and submitted prior to the release of any results awarded through the TAG process. This may be in the form of one overarching declaration for all Functional Skills TAG submissions until the end of the window (21 May or 31 August 2021), or a separate declaration for each submission a centre makes. Any false declaration will be investigated and appropriate action will be taken.

The declaration from your Head of Centre must confirm that:

- You have explored all possible avenues to live test for the learners being put forward for TAGs and have evidence available to submit upon request
- You are only entering TAGs for learners who are eligible and have a valid reason of safety concerns as to why they cannot access live assessment
- You have supporting evidence available for each learner that supports the award of a TAG
- You will adhere to the process defined by us in relation to TAG arrangements
- The approach you have taken to making judgements e.g. the evidence that has been used by teachers to make the judgement;
- You have completed an internally quality assurance process to demonstrate that all judgements have been standardised before submission of TAGs
- You have compared the volume of achievement for submissions against previous years and the volume is in line with what would be expected normally.
- Only staff who have taught the candidate have judged the teacher assessed grade.
- All staff were briefed and familiar with the process and requirements as outlined in this document and associated materials to support the process
- That there was sufficient valid evidence available to underpin the judgements to be made by teachers **before** any TAGs were requested.
- That teachers took into account any access arrangements and reasonable adjustments that would be made to the assessment where a candidate would have been entitled to these in the normal course of assessment.
- That judgements were evidence-based and objective in respect of any candidate with a protected characteristic or any other factor (for example character, appearance, social background or special educational needs) that does not relate to their knowledge, skills and abilities in relation to the subject.
- That where more than one member of staff was involved in teaching an individual candidate for any component, they worked together to standardise their judgements and approach.

TAGs must not be submitted based on judgements made by staff other than those who have taught the learner the component for which the grade is submitted. The Head of Centre must contact us to discuss options before a teacher assessed grade is submitted where no member of staff is available who has taught the learner whose TAG is being submitted.

You must retain the evidence which is used to support a Teacher assessed grade until 6 months after the date of issue of the result, or the conclusion of any appeal in relation to the result, whichever is later.

You should also keep records of candidate enrolment and attendance records for six months after the release of results.

e) External quality assurance

We need to be satisfied that your centre's internal process is robust and leads to fair and accurate outcomes for the learners included in any alternative arrangement. Once you have submitted your request for a TAG, along with the Head of Centre Declaration, it is vital that you retain all evidence and clear records as awarding organisations may request access to:

- All or some of the evidence used to confirm learner eligibility
- All or some of the evidence used to support TAG judgements
- Records of IQA process and the learner evidence reviewed at each stage
- Head of Centre declaration of the outcomes
- Learner enrolment and attendance records

We will sample centres to ensure they have followed their own processes adequately. We may choose to extend these checks to review a sample of the evidence used and, where concerns remain, may ask to see all evidence for all learners to provide reassurances of the validity of the outcomes produced by the centre.

We may use all evidence at our disposal, taking a risk based approach, to decide on the nature of the checks we carry out for each centre which may vary on a case-by-case basis. We may, for example, choose to increase sampling in cases where a significant volume of learners is submitted.

If your centre is sampled, we will carry out additional checks of data we hold for individual centres to satisfy our self that the volume of learners being submitted is valid. If we have any outstanding concerns regarding an individual centre's submission we may withhold results until we have satisfied our self of the validity of the centre's submission

Where a submission shows that the guidance has been followed; there is valid evidence upon which judgments have been based and TAGs look reasonable in the context of historic performance, the submission will generally be accepted in good faith. For Legacy English and maths, Level 1 and Level 2, this includes the context of the withdrawal of the qualification and learners needing to have started their learning programme prior to the end of August 2019.

If we have concerns, we may ask for more information or ask you to review your submission. You will have an opportunity to review and revise the submission or to provide additional justification for it. We may ask for some or all of the learner evidence as part of this process. If you cannot provide evidence when requested, this may also be investigated as suspected malpractice and may result in sanctions or penalties against the centre and/or individuals.

We follow the process of investigation outlined in the **JCQ Suspected Malpractice: Policies and Procedures 2020/21**, available on the JCQ website [here](#) and which still applies in this situation.

Ultimately, where proposed teacher assessed grades are not felt to be justifiable, we may reject some or all of those proposed. In these circumstances, you will have access to an appeal process about the procedures we have followed.

f) Equality and avoiding discrimination

Your judgements about your learner's teacher assessed grade should be objective and be made in an impartial, balanced and avoid unconscious bias. The teacher assessed grades must be based on evidence of each candidate's expected likely level of attainment.

Access arrangements should have been in place when evidence was generated. Where they were not, you should take that into account when coming to your judgement. This could include input from appropriate specialist teachers and other professionals.

If a student is unable to take an assessment or suffers a traumatic event that might affect their performance, Special Consideration will not apply for Teacher Assessed Grades because these learners will not be taking their live assessment. However, where illness or other personal circumstances might have temporarily affected performance, for example in a past/sample paper, you should bear that in mind when making your judgement. You may wish to give a student another opportunity to generate the evidence.

Every effort must be made to ensure that vulnerable candidates or those with special educational needs or protected characteristics are not disadvantaged.

Learners must not be systematically advantaged or disadvantaged by your assessment grades process due to any factor that does not relate to their knowledge, skills and abilities in relation to the subject (for example their behaviour, character, appearance, social background or any specific needs).

You must also manage any Conflicts of Interest (COI) within your centre to ensure such judgements are fair and objective.

g) Appeals

TAGs will only need to be submitted where you have evidence to support the award of a Pass grade, where you can clearly demonstrate that the learner(s) are unable to access a live test. Where you decide a learner is not eligible for a TAG, learners will be able to appeal against your decision and via your appeals process. You can consider/accept an appeal if learners can demonstrate that they:

- Are unable to take a live test either remotely or in person
- Are unable to complete a live test with other existing adaptations
- Require a result immediately for progression purposes

This must be further supported by evidence that would be used to underpin a teacher judgement. So, the learner would need to demonstrate to the centre that they:

- are assessment ready
- have sufficient supporting evidence demonstrating they are capable of passing the assessment.

If on reviewing the learner's appeal, you believe that an error of judgement has been made and a TAG should be requested, provided you have conducted internal quality assurance to support the application, then you can submit a TAG during the eligible period. All evidence of the appeals process must be retained by you.

The same process should be followed for private candidates.

If the outcome of the centre review is that a TAG should not be submitted for the learner, you should explain the reason to the learner and support them to understand the decision.

Further details on how to appeal against OCR's decision not to accept a TAG will be shared in due course.