

**IN FORCE FOR
LIMITED PURPOSES**

CONDITIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

Vocational and technical qualifications contingency regulatory framework, COVID-19 Conditions and Requirements

August 2021

In force for limited purposes

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About this document

This document is part of a suite of documents which sets out our regulatory requirements for awarding organisations offering vocational and technical qualifications affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Requirements set out in this document

This document sets out the Vocational and Technical Qualifications Contingency Regulatory Framework (the VCR Conditions). These conditions come into effect at 13:00 on 24 March 2021 for all vocational and technical qualifications which fall within categories A and B as defined in Condition VCR1.8.

It also sets out our requirements in relation to the following:

- the adaptation of Category A Qualifications and Category B Qualifications
- the determination of results for Category B Qualifications
- the principles to be applied by awarding organisations when adapting Category A Qualifications and Category B Qualifications and when determining results for Category B Qualifications

With respect to all qualifications to which the conditions set out in this document apply, save to the extent set out in those conditions, awarding organisations must also comply with:

- our [General Conditions of Recognition](#), which apply to all awarding organisations and qualifications, and
- all [relevant Regulatory Documents](#)

Revisions to this document

This document was republished on 4 May 2021 in order to:

- add Condition VCR8 (Additional Assessment opportunity) following [consultation](#)
- correct a typographical paragraphing error in VCR6

This document was republished on 6 August 2021 following [consultation](#) in order to:

- make minor drafting changes to Conditions VCR1.3 and VCR1.8 to allow for the withdrawal of Category B qualifications from 1 September 2021

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- amend Condition VCR7.1 so that it applies only to a qualification that is designated as a Category B qualification

Alongside the version of this document that was republished on 6 August 2021, Ofqual published two notices:

- the first notice [withdraws the designation of Category B Qualifications](#) from 1 September 2021 subject to saving and transitional provisions
- the second notice [disapplies Condition VCR7.3 in respect of all VTQs](#) from 1 September 2021 subject to saving and transitional provisions

Condition VCR1: Application, interpretation and definitions

Application

- VCR1.1 The VCR Conditions apply –
- (a) to all VTQs, and
 - (b) until such date as is specified in, or determined under, any notice in writing published by Ofqual under this condition.
- VCR1.2 Any such notice published by Ofqual may –
- (a) be issued in respect of one or more –
 - (i) VTQs, or
 - (ii) VCR Conditions,
 - (b) be varied or withdrawn by Ofqual at any time prior to the date specified in or determined under it, and
 - (c) contain any transitional and saving provisions that Ofqual considers appropriate.
- VCR1.3 An awarding organisation must comply with the requirements of any transitional and saving provisions –
- (a) contained in a notice published by Ofqual under Condition VCR1.2, or
 - (b) specified by Ofqual in relation to the withdrawal of the designation of a qualification as a Category B Qualification.

Interpretation and definitions

- VCR1.4 Unless alternative provision has been made in Condition VCR1.8, the following shall apply to the VCR Conditions –
- (a) the rules of interpretation and definitions outlined in General Condition J1,
 - (b) the definitions outlined in the Qualification Level Conditions and the Subject Level Conditions.
- VCR1.5 Except in the circumstances described in Condition VCR1.6, the requirements imposed by the VCR Conditions apply in addition to the requirements imposed by the General Conditions of Recognition and

- any relevant Qualification Level Conditions and Subject Level Conditions.
- VCR1.6 To the extent that there is any inconsistency between –
(a) a requirement of a VCR Condition, and
(b) a requirement of a General Condition of Recognition, a Level Condition or a Subject Level Condition,
such that an awarding organisation could not comply with both such requirements, the awarding organisation must comply with the requirement of the VCR Condition and is not obliged to comply with the requirement of the other Condition.
- VCR1.7 Unless the context suggests otherwise, in the VCR Conditions references to a 'result' means a result for a unit or the VTQ, as relevant.
- VCR1.8 In these Conditions the following words shall have the meaning given to them below (and cognate expressions should be construed accordingly) –

Adaptations

Any changes made by an awarding organisation to a VTQ that it makes available, including changes to the design, setting, delivery or marking of an assessment.

Category A Qualification

A qualification which is not any of the following –

- (a) An advanced extension award qualification.
- (b) An EPA (end point assessment).
- (c) A GCSE Qualification.
- (d) A GCE Qualification.
- (e) A project qualification (at any level).
- (f) Designated as a Category B Qualification by Ofqual.

Where a VTQ has previously been designated as a Category B Qualification and Ofqual withdraws that designation, the VTQ will become a Category A Qualification from the date specified by Ofqual subject to any saving and transitional provisions that Ofqual may specify.

Category B Qualification

A qualification designated as a Category B Qualification by Ofqual and identified as such on Ofqual's website or on a website or application made available by or on behalf of Ofqual. Ofqual will notify an awarding organisation of any changes to that

designation and any applicable saving and transitional provisions in relation to that change.

Private Candidate

A Learner in relation to whom there is no Relevant Centre.

Qualification Level Condition

Any Qualification Level Condition that applies to a VTQ.

Relevant Centre

In relation to a Learner, a Centre –

- (a) with which the Learner is registered, and
- (b) which materially contributed to the preparation of the Learner for the assessment (whether through teaching or instruction provided by Teachers employed by it or otherwise).

Subject Level Condition

Any Subject Level Condition that applies to a VTQ.

Technical Advice Notice

Advice provided by Ofqual to an awarding organisation in writing in relation to any matter relevant to the VCR Conditions.

VTQ

A qualification which is any of the following –

- (a) a Category A Qualification, or
- (b) a Category B Qualification.

Condition VCR2: Reviewing and adapting Category A Qualifications

- VCR2.1 In respect of each Category A Qualification which it makes available, an awarding organisation –
- (a) must consider whether it is appropriate to Adapt the qualification in order to mitigate any disruption caused by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic to teaching, learning, and delivery of assessments in relation to the qualification for Learners taking it, and
 - (b) where it considers it appropriate to do so on that basis, may Adapt the qualification.
- VCR2.2 Where an awarding organisation Adapts a VTQ under Condition VCR2.1(b), it must take all reasonable steps to do so –
- (a) in compliance with any requirements, and
 - (b) having regard to any guidance, which may be published by Ofqual and revised from time to time.

Condition VCR3: Results for Category B Qualifications

Issuing results

- VCR3.1 In respect of each Category B Qualification which it makes available, an awarding organisation must ensure that it takes all reasonable steps to issue a result to each Learner who –
- (a) either –
 - (i) was or is registered to take, between 1 August 2020 and 31 August 2021 (or any alternative date that Ofqual may specify), an assessment that would have led to the issue of a result, or
 - (ii) could reasonably have been expected by the awarding organisation to have been so registered, and
 - (b) is due to be awarded that qualification in the UK.
- VCR3.2 An awarding organisation must take all reasonable steps to issue that result –
- (a) in line with any date or timescale published in respect of the qualification under Condition H6.1(e), or
 - (b) where it is not possible to issue the result in line with that date or timescale –
 - (i) as soon as possible, or
 - (ii) in line with any alternative date or timescale approved in advance by Ofqual.
- VCR3.3 In respect of a Category B Qualification which it makes available –
- (a) an awarding organisation is not required to issue a result for each unit and may issue a result for the qualification only,
 - (b) but may choose to issue a result for each unit, and Condition H6.1(a) is to be read accordingly.

Determining results

- VCR3.4 Except where Condition VCR3.6 applies, an awarding organisation must take all reasonable steps to ensure that result is determined –
- (a) in compliance with any requirements, and
 - (b) having regard to any guidance,
- which may be published by Ofqual and revised from time to time.
- VCR3.5 Where, having complied with the requirements under Condition VCR3.4, an awarding organisation decides to Adapt a Category B Qualification, it must take all reasonable steps to do so –
- (a) in compliance with any requirements, and
 - (b) having regard to any guidance,
- published by Ofqual under Condition VCR2.2 and revised from time to time.
- VCR3.6 Where an awarding organisation can currently deliver and/or mark as normal the assessments to be taken for a Category B Qualification which it makes available, it may –
- (a) deliver and mark those assessments, or
 - (b) choose to comply with Conditions VCR3.4 and VCR3.5 where it considers it appropriate to do so.

Qualifications awarded outside the UK

- VCR3.7 In respect of each Learner falling within Condition VCR3.1(a) who is due to be awarded the relevant qualification outside the UK, an awarding organisation may choose to issue a result in line with the VCR Conditions.

Condition VCR4: Principles to be applied

- VCR4.1 An awarding organisation must ensure that in complying with Conditions VCR2 and VCR3, it takes all reasonable steps to –
- (a) comply with the principles published by Ofqual and revised from time to time, and
 - (b) in respect of a Category B Qualification, only where there is a conflict between two or more of those principles, achieve a balance between those principles in line with any requirements published by Ofqual and revised from time to time.

Condition VCR5: Keeping a record of decision-making

- VCR5.1 In relation to a VTQ which it makes available, an awarding organisation must –
- (a) in respect of a Category A Qualification, maintain a record, as relevant, of –
 - (i) the review undertaken under Condition VCR2.1(a) and its decision as to whether it is appropriate to Adapt the qualification under Condition VCR2.1(b),
 - (ii) the decisions it has made in Adapting the qualification in compliance with the requirements, and having regard to the guidance, published under Condition VCR2.2,
 - (iii) how it has complied with Condition VCR4.1,
 - (iv) the rationale for the decisions referred to in subparagraphs (i) to (iii) of this Condition, and
 - (v) any other information specified in any requirements that may be published by Ofqual and revised from time to time, and
 - (b) in respect of a Category B Qualification, maintain a record, as relevant, of –
 - (i) the reasons why it cannot provide a result in line with Condition VCR3,
 - (ii) the approach it has used to determine a result in line with the requirements published under Condition VCR3.4(a),
 - (iii) any decisions it has made in Adapting the qualification in compliance with the requirements, and having regard to the guidance, published under Condition VCR2.2,
 - (iv) how it has complied with Condition VCR4.1, including, in particular, how it has sought to balance compliance with the principles in line with Condition VCR4.1(b),
 - (v) the rationale for the decisions referred to in subparagraphs (i) to (iv) of this Condition, and
 - (vi) any other information specified in any requirements that may be published by Ofqual and revised from time to time, and

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- (c) maintain that record in a form specified in any requirements that may be published by Ofqual and revised from time to time, and
- (d) provide that record to Ofqual upon request.

Condition VCR6: Support, guidance and information to be provided to Centres

Support for Centres

VCR6.1 An awarding organisation must –

- (a) provide effective guidance to a Centre –
 - (i) which the Centre may reasonably require in relation to an Adapted assessment provided by the awarding organisation under Condition VCR2.1(b) or Condition VCR3.5, and
 - (ii) on the provision of any information that the awarding organisation requires from the Centre in order to comply with the requirements published under Condition VCR3.4(a), and
- (b) provide clear and effective arrangements through which the Centre can liaise with the awarding organisation if it encounters difficulties in providing that information.

Information to be provided to Centres

VCR6.2 In relation to a VTQ which it makes available, the approaches adopted by an awarding organisation to arrive at a result for a Learner under Conditions VCR2 and VCR3, as relevant, must be sufficiently transparent to –

- (a) preserve public confidence in the qualification,
- (b) meet the reasonable needs of Users of the qualification,
- (c) allow Learners and Centres to consider whether to appeal under Condition I1.

VCR6.3 An awarding organisation must establish, maintain and comply with arrangements which –

- (a) must require the information set out in Condition VCR6.4 to be provided upon request to –
 - (i) a Relevant Centre (on a Learner's behalf), and
 - (ii) a Private Candidate, and
- (b) may require that information to be provided upon request to a Learner who is not a Private Candidate.

VCR6.4 The information to be provided under those arrangements is –

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- (a) the Adaptations that an awarding organisation has made to a VTQ in line with the requirements published under Condition VCR2.2, and
- (b) the information used to determine the result issued to a Learner in line with the requirements published under Condition VCR3.4(a).

VCR6.5 The arrangements must –

- (a) provide sufficient information, and
- (b) allow a reasonable time,

for Learners and Centres to consider whether to request an appeal under Condition I1.

VCR6.6 The arrangements may –

- (a) provide that the awarding organisation shall only provide the relevant information on payment of a fee,
- (b) specify other reasonable requirements for the making of a request for the information, and
- (c) specify a time period during which the information must be requested.

Condition VCR7: Appeals

- VCR7.1 Condition TQ1.1(c) does not apply to a Technical Qualification which an awarding organisation makes available (and Condition I1 therefore applies to such a qualification) in circumstances where that qualification is designated as a Category B Qualification.
- VCR7.2 Condition I1.2(d) does not apply to any appeal in respect of a result for a Category B Qualification where an awarding organisation follows the approach to appeals set out in the General Qualifications Alternative Awarding Framework.
- VCR7.3 Where an awarding organisation discovers through an appeals process that any result which it has issued is incorrect it must –
- (a) consider whether it is appropriate to correct that result, having regard to the guidance issued by Ofqual under Condition H6.3(b)(i), and
 - (b) correct that result where it considers it appropriate to do so.

Condition VCR8: Additional Assessment opportunity

- VCR8.1 In respect of the assessments to be taken for a Category B Qualification which it makes available, an awarding organisation must ensure that –
- (a) where it normally provides an opportunity between 1 September and 31 January of an academic year for Learners to take those assessments, it takes all reasonable steps to provide that opportunity in 2021 to each Learner –
 - (i) to whom it would normally provide that opportunity,
 - (ii) who was issued with a result under the VCR Conditions, and
 - (iii) who was or is registered to take an assessment, between 1 August 2020 and 31 August 2021, that would have led to a result being issued, but was not issued with a result, and
 - (b) where it does not normally provide an opportunity between September and January of an academic year for Learners to complete those assessments, it provides such an opportunity in 2021 to those Learners set out in Condition VCR8.1(a) where it reasonably considers that sufficient demand for that opportunity exists.
- VCR8.2 The requirement in Condition VCR8.1(b) does not apply where an awarding organisation reasonably considers that providing that opportunity would be –
- (a) impracticable, or
 - (b) would create a disproportionate burden on the awarding organisation or Centres.
- VCR8.3 An awarding organisation must seek to ensure that its approach to an assessment provided under Condition VCR8.1 –
- (a) minimises burdens as far as possible, and
 - (b) is as deliverable as possible, including by Centres and Teachers.

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- VCR8.4 An awarding organisation must comply with any requirements specified to it by Ofqual in relation to the provision of assessment opportunities for VTQs.
- VCR8.5 In respect of each assessment it delivers under Conditions VCR8.1 and VCR8.3 –
- (a) an awarding organisation must treat the qualification to which that assessment relates as a Category A Qualification for the purposes of compliance with Conditions VCR2 and VCR4 to VCR6, and
 - (b) Conditions VCR3 and VCR7 do not apply.

Condition VCR9: Technical Advice Notices

- VCR9.1 An awarding organisation must –
- (a) have regard to any Technical Advice Notice issued by Ofqual to the awarding organisation, and
 - (b) notify Ofqual of how it has complied with Condition VCR9.1 within the timescale specified in that Technical Advice Notice.

Requirements in relation to the Adaptation of VTQs

Condition VCR2.2(a) allows us to specify requirements and guidance in relation to the Adaptation of VTQs.

We set out our requirements in relation to the Adaptation of VTQs below. These requirements apply to Category A Qualifications under Condition VCR2.2(a) and to Category B Qualifications under Condition VCR3.5(a).

General requirements in relation to Adaptations

There are a number of ways in which an awarding organisation may make changes to a VTQ which it makes available in order to –

- (a) in relation to Category A Qualifications, mitigate any disruption caused by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic to teaching, learning and assessment for Learners taking the qualification, and
- (b) in relation to Category B Qualifications, maximise the number of Learners that receive results.

These include –

- (a) making more teaching and learning time available, for example by considering alternative conditions under which assessments could take place so that they do not all need to be directly supervised, or by streamlining assessments,
- (b) changing the way in which assessments are delivered, for example by using an online rather than paper-based test, or carrying out an assessment remotely rather than face-to-face,
- (c) adapting assessment methods to take account of social distancing and public health guidance, for example by using a practical simulation in place of an observation, or professional discussion in place of a practical demonstration,
- (d) changing Invigilation requirements, for example by allowing the use of online Invigilation so that assessments can take place in a wider range of settings,
- (e) waiving or adjusting work experience or placement requirements, for example allowing Learners to undertake a shorter period of work experience, or
- (f) changing the way in which a qualification is quality assured, for example by allowing for standardisation or Centre Assessment Standards Scrutiny to take place remotely or on-line.

In all cases, an awarding organisation must ensure that any Adaptations that it makes to a VTQ are in line with the principles set out under Condition VCR4.1.

In particular, an awarding organisation must take all reasonable steps to minimise risks to Validity by ensuring that coverage of the key areas of the construct of the qualification is retained within any Adapted assessment.

Where a qualification contains Components that are required to show occupational competence for employment or apprenticeships, and those Components cannot be Validly Adapted and must therefore be delayed, the qualification overall cannot be awarded until those Components are completed.

An awarding organisation must act only within the limits of its capacity and capability.

Equalities considerations

In all cases, an awarding organisation must comply with the requirements of Condition D2 (Accessibility of qualifications) and Condition G6 (Arrangements for reasonable adjustments).

Likewise, an awarding organisation must ensure that in making any Adaptations to an assessment for a VTQ which it makes available it Minimises Bias, as far as possible.

Occupational and professional qualifications and licences to practise

Where a VTQ, or a Component of a VTQ, that it makes available acts as a licence to practise, or is used to give access to a particular profession, an awarding organisation must ensure that it strikes an appropriate balance between –

- (a) maintaining the Validity of the qualification in order to meet its objective, and
- (b) making Adaptations to assessments in order to provide the mitigation outlined in Condition VCR2.1.

In relation to such qualifications, an awarding organisation should err on the side of maintaining the Validity of the qualification, even where this means that it is not possible to provide assessments.

We recognise that, depending on the objective of the qualification and the uses to which it is put, professional and sector regulatory and oversight bodies may potentially have a view on permissible Adaptations or other approaches to be taken. They may also play a role in ensuring consistent approaches across awarding organisations offering similar qualifications, or which have a similar objective.

In considering any Adaptations to a VTQ that it makes available, an awarding organisation must have regard to any specific requirements or guidance issued by any relevant professional or sector body.

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An awarding organisation must not seek to follow the requirements and guidance issued by such a body where doing so would breach the principles set out under Condition VCR4.1.

Requirements in relation to the determination of results for Category B Qualifications

Condition VCR3.4(a) allows us to specify requirements and guidance in relation to the determination of results to be issued for Category B Qualifications.

We set out those requirements below.

Overall approach to awarding

In considering its overall approach to awarding for a Category B Qualification that it makes available, an awarding organisation must –

- (a) take into consideration the characteristics of the qualification, including purpose, use, size, structure, and delivery approach,
- (b) take into consideration the rationale for awarding when not all assessments are completed, such as disruption to teaching and learning, and compliance with public health and safety guidance, and
- (c) in light of the above, where relevant, decide the extent to which it is possible and appropriate to align the approach to awarding used for qualifications under the General Qualifications Alternative Awarding Framework (GQAA).

Determination of results

In considering its overall approach to the determination of results for a Category B Qualification that it makes available, an awarding organisation must go through the stages set out below.

Identification of sources of information

For each Category B Qualification that it makes available, and for each Learner taking it, an awarding organisation must –

- (a) identify the relevant sources of information that are both currently available and potentially available in respect of the qualification as a whole and/or for each assessment (for example, Qualification Level Teacher Assessed

Grades¹, Component Level Teacher Assessed Grades² (together 'Teacher Assessed Grades'), or banked Component results), and

- (b) consider the use to which that information may be put in relation to the determination of results in respect of the qualification as a whole and/or for each assessment.

Some sources of information that may be used for the determination of individual results, and some factors relevant to deciding their role, are described in Table 1 as set out in the guidance published under Condition VCR3.4(b).

Developing an approach

Once an awarding organisation has identified and considered the sources of information available to it, or which it can secure within the required timeframe, it must develop an approach comprising the following two elements –

- (a) The initial determination of each Learner's result.
- (b) A quality assurance check on that initial determination.

Minimum evidential threshold required by an awarding organisation to determine a result

Having identified the relevant sources of information, an awarding organisation must ensure that its approach leads to results that are sufficiently Valid and Reliable. This means that there is –

- (a) appropriate evidence available to Centres upon which to base a Teacher Assessed Grade, and/or
- (b) sufficient banked Component data.

Unless there are sufficient sources of information, an awarding organisation should conclude that it is unable to issue a result which has sufficient Validity and Reliability to meet Principles B1 and B2 as set out under Condition VCR4.1. In such cases, under Condition VCR5.1(b)(i), an awarding organisation must keep a record of why it considers that the minimum evidential threshold is not met in relation to the relevant Learners.

¹ In these requirements, a 'Qualification Level Teacher Assessed Grade' means information provided by a Centre in relation to a Learner's performance at qualification level.

² In these requirements, a 'Component Level Teacher Assessed Grade' means information provided by a Centre in relation to a Learner's performance at individual Component level.

In relation to Teacher Assessed Grades, an awarding organisation should set out clear expectations in relation to how those grades should be determined as set out in the next section.

Guidance for Centres regarding Teacher Assessed Grades

Where Teacher Assessed Grades will form the basis of a result, an awarding organisation must –

- (a) request a Centre to provide a result in respect of each Category B Qualification or assessment for that qualification for each Learner at the Centre, or Private Candidate working with the Centre, to whom the awarding organisation is required to issue a result under Condition VCR3.1,
- (b) take all reasonable steps to ensure that Centres judge the Teacher Assessed Grade against the standard set for the qualification in previous years in which assessments took place, and,
- (c) take all reasonable steps to ensure that the Teacher Assessed Grade is based on the Centre's judgement as to the individual Learner's actual level of attainment based on appropriate evidence.

The evidence considered by a Centre may include the following –

- (a) Performance on any assessment for the qualification even if this has not been fully completed. Where relevant, an awarding organisation should encourage Centres to support Learners to complete internal assessment³ as far as possible, and for Centres to mark those assessments.
- (b) Performance on any class or homework assessments and mock exams taken over the course of study.
- (c) Records of the Learner's performance over the course of study in the relevant qualification, including, for example, progress review data, classwork, and/or participation in practical activities, demonstrations and performances.
- (d) Any other relevant evidence.

An awarding organisation must take all reasonable steps to ensure that the evidence which is used to support a Teacher Assessed Grade is retained by the Centre until 6 months after the date of the issue of the result, or the conclusion of any appeal in relation to that result, whichever is later.

An awarding organisation must take all reasonable steps to ensure that, as far as possible, a Centre –

³ In these requirements, an 'internal assessment' is an assessment which is marked by a Centre and then subject to Moderation or verification by the awarding organisation.

- (a) is consistent in the judgements that it uses to arrive at its Teacher Assessed Grades for Learners taking the same qualification (e.g. through the provision of exemplification materials, or other support materials),
- (b) is consistent in the evidence that it uses to arrive at its Teacher Assessed Grades for Learners taking the same qualification (e.g. through the provision of guidance by the awarding organisation on the evaluation of evidence),
- (c) is satisfied that the evidence it uses can be authenticated as having been generated by the relevant Learner, and where appropriate, under any required conditions specified by the awarding organisation,
- (d) in relation to any Learner who has been granted Special Consideration, takes that Special Consideration into account,
- (e) in relation to any Learner who has an agreed Reasonable Adjustment, takes into account the impact on that Learner of any lack of that adjustment in producing any evidence which is used to inform the Teacher Assessed Grade for that Learner, and
- (f) based on clear guidance supplied by the Awarding Organisation under Condition VCR6.1(a)(ii), is satisfied the evidence is sufficient to support a grade.

Internal quality assurance of Teacher Assessed Grades

An awarding organisation must take all reasonable steps to ensure that a Centre has in place, and complies with, effective arrangements to quality assure its Teacher Assessed Grades before submitting them to the awarding organisation.

An awarding organisation must take all reasonable steps to ensure that the arrangements that a Centre has in place in relation to internal quality assurance include –

- (a) a clear approach to making judgements in relation to each Teacher Assessed Grade, including how evidence will be used, and
- (b) a high-level cross-check of the Teacher Assessed Grades against results for previous cohorts at the Centre who took assessments for the same qualification in previous years to provide an indication that Teacher Assessed Grades overall are not overly lenient or harsh by comparison with those results from previous years.

In particular, an awarding organisation must take all reasonable steps to ensure that the Teacher Assessed Grade has been reviewed by both –

- (a) subject Teachers or Assessors, and
- (b) the relevant head of department or equivalent or, where there is no person in such a role, the head of Centre or equivalent.

Whereas data from previous years can potentially provide a useful high-level cross-check on overall grading patterns to ensure that objectivity is being maintained, each Learner's Teacher Assessed Grade should be determined by the specific performance of that student in relation to the relevant qualification.

As part of the guidance provided under Condition VCR6.1(a)(ii), an awarding organisation must provide guidance for Centres on internal quality assurance.

External quality assurance by awarding organisations of Teacher Assessed Grades

An awarding organisation must ensure that it has in place, and complies with, effective arrangements that allow it to undertake quality assurance of Teacher Assessed Grades.

An awarding organisation must draw on a range of information to guide the approach it takes to quality assure Teacher Assessed Grades. This information will include, where relevant and available:

- (a) historical Centre results data,
- (b) Centre risk profiles, and
- (c) the plausibility of results based upon banked Component data.

An awarding organisation must take all reasonable steps to ensure that the approach a Centre has used to determine a Teacher Assessed Grade is based on appropriate evidence and is in line with the guidance it has provided to its Centres.

Where an awarding organisation considers it necessary for the purposes of conducting its quality assurance, an awarding organisation must:

- (a) require the Centre to provide information to support its results profile, e.g. in comparison to past performance,
- (b) require the Centre to provide details of its approach to internal quality assurance, and
- (c) sample the evidence on which Teacher Assessed Grades are based.

An awarding organisation must not issue a result where any issues identified as part of its quality assurance have not been resolved to the awarding organisation's satisfaction.

Providing guidance to Centres on how results will be determined

Under Condition VCR6.1(a)(ii), an awarding organisation must provide effective guidance to a Centre on the provision of any information that the awarding organisation requires it to provide in order to determine results.

For each Category B Qualification which it makes available, an awarding organisation must provide guidance for Centres which explains –

- (a) the sources of information required to meet the minimum evidential threshold for the determination of results,
- (b) how that information will be used to determine results for certificating and non-certificating Learners,
- (c) the Centre's role in relation to the evidence that will be needed to determine the initial Teacher Assessed Grade, where relevant,
- (d) the internal quality assurance arrangements expected of Centres,
- (e) what information must be provided by the Centre to the awarding organisation, and by when, to support the delivery of results to the agreed schedule,
- (f) how the awarding organisation will quality assure the initial Teacher Assessed Grade, where relevant, and
- (g) the basis and process for appeals.

Taking account of differences in available evidence for Learners taking the same qualification

For certain Category B Qualifications, even where evidence does meet the threshold, the range of evidence may not be uniform for all Learners, particularly where there is variability in –

- (a) the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on teaching, learning and assessment,
- (b) how the course of teaching for a qualification is delivered by Centres,
- (c) the point at which Learners are entered for assessments during the course of study,
- (d) the impact on Learners of taking assessments during January, or
- (e) how normal quality assurance is carried out by the awarding organisation.

For example, some Learners may have taken a much higher proportion of the required assessments for a qualification than other Learners, even within the same Centre or class.

In such cases, an awarding organisation –

- (a) may need to use different sources, or combinations of sources, of information for different Learners, and allow Centres to do the same, and
- (b) must ensure, as part of its quality assurance, that the different approaches for the determination of results used for different Learners do not systematically advantage or disadvantage those Learners.

Mixed and parallel approaches to awarding

For the same qualification, an awarding organisation may provide results determined on the basis of Adapted assessments for some Components and on the basis of other approaches for other Components (e.g. Teacher Assessed Grades).

An awarding organisation may also take different approaches with respect to different Learners taking the same Component where, for example, there is sufficient evidence to issue a result for one Learner but not another.

Learners who took or expected to take an assessment in January 2021

For Learners who took or expected to take assessments for a Category B Qualification in January 2021, an awarding organisation must ensure that –

- non-certificating Learners who were absent from January assessments are eligible to be awarded a result through the use of other approaches (e.g. Teacher Assessed Grades), and
- non-certificating Learners who did take the assessments, but who found having to take those assessments in the context of the disruption in January adversely impacted their ability to demonstrate their level of attainment, to also be eligible to be awarded a result through the use of other approaches (e.g. Teacher Assessed Grades).

Principles to be applied

Condition VCR4.1 allows us to specify principles with which an awarding organisation must comply in Adapting assessments under Condition VCR2 and determining results under Condition VCR3, as well as the balance to be achieved when those principles conflict.

We have specified two separate sets of principles, one to be applied in relation to Category A Qualifications and the other to be applied in relation to Category B Qualifications. We have specified a hierarchy for the principles to be applied in relation to the latter, but not the former.

We set out these two sets of principles below.

The principles in relation to Category A Qualifications

An awarding organisation must take all reasonable steps to comply with the principles below when complying with Condition VCR2 in relation to a Category A Qualification.

Principle A1 – As far as possible and without prejudice to the other principles, an awarding organisation must seek to ensure that the Adaptations which it makes to a qualification assist with mitigating the impact on teaching, learning or assessments caused by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on Learners taking that qualification.

Principle A2 – An awarding organisation must seek to ensure that, where it makes any Adaptations to its qualifications in accordance with the VCR Conditions, the Validity and Reliability of those qualifications is maintained.

Principle A3 – An awarding organisation must seek to maintain standards, as far as possible, within the same qualification in line with previous years, and across similar qualifications made available by the awarding organisation and by other awarding organisations.

Principle A4 – An awarding organisation must seek to ensure, as far as possible, that the Adaptations which it makes to a qualification do not serve to advantage or disadvantage Learners taking that qualification against their peers taking similar VTQs or, where relevant, general qualifications not covered by the VCR Conditions.

The principles in relation to Category B Qualifications

An awarding organisation must take all reasonable steps to comply with the principles below when complying with Condition VCR3. Where an awarding organisation Adapts a Category B Qualification, it must take all reasonable steps to comply with these principles rather than those that apply to Category A Qualifications.

Principle B1 – An awarding organisation must seek to issue results in line with Condition VCR3.1 that –

- (a) meet the requirements of the VCR Conditions, and
- (b) in particular, are based on evidence (whether from an assessment or otherwise) which ensures that they are sufficiently Valid and Reliable,

to as many Learners as possible who are taking a Category B Qualification which it makes available.

Principle B2 – An awarding organisation must seek to ensure that each result that it issues is as Reliable as possible and reflects, as far as possible,

- (a) where all assessments for the qualification take place as normal or in Adapted form, the Learner's level of attainment as demonstrated in those assessments, and
- (b) where not all assessments take place, the Learner's level of attainment as demonstrated by any relevant evidence considered in line with the requirements published under Condition VCR3.4, together with any assessment that the Learner has taken for the qualification.

Principle B3 – An awarding organisation must seek to ensure, as far as possible, that the arrangements it puts in place to award a Category B Qualification do not serve to advantage or disadvantage different Learners or groups of Learners taking the same qualification.

Principle B4 – An awarding organisation must seek to ensure, as far as possible, that the arrangements which it puts in place to award a Category B Qualification do not serve to advantage or disadvantage Learners taking that qualification against their peers taking similar VTQs or general qualifications not covered by the VCR Framework.

Principle B5 – An awarding organisation must seek to ensure that its approach to awarding a Category B Qualification–

- (a) minimises burdens as far as possible, and
- (b) is as deliverable as possible, including by Centres and Teachers, with appropriate oversight by Ofqual.

Principle B6 – An awarding organisation must seek to maintain standards, as far as possible, within the same qualification in line with previous years.

Principle B7 – An awarding organisation must seek to maintain standards, as far as possible, across similar qualifications made available by the awarding organisation and by other awarding organisations.

The principles for Category B Qualifications are arranged in a hierarchy with Principle B1 at the top and Principle B7 at the bottom.

Where there is a conflict between two or more principles such that compliance with one principle will reduce the degree to which an awarding organisation can comply with another, the awarding organisation must –

- (a) give priority to the principles in accordance with their hierarchy, with the greatest priority being given to compliance with principles further up the hierarchy, and
- (b) without prejudice to the above requirement, secure compliance with all of the principles to the greatest extent possible.



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