

REGULATIONS

Extraordinary regulatory framework: Vocational and Technical Qualifications, COVID-19 Conditions and Requirements

May 2020

ofqual

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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 during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Requirements set out in this document

This document sets out VTQ Covid-19 Conditions. These conditions come into effect at 14:00 on 22 May 2020 for all vocational and technical qualifications which fall within categories 1 – 3 as defined in Condition VTQCov1.8.

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

- The calculation of results for Category 1 Qualifications and Category 2 Qualifications.
- The Adaptation of assessments for Category 1 Qualifications, Category 2 Qualifications and Category 3 Qualifications.
- The principles to be applied by awarding organisations when making calculating results and Adapting assessments for vocational and technical qualifications.

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

- our *General Conditions of Recognition*,¹ which apply to all awarding organisations and qualifications, and
- all relevant Regulatory Documents.²

¹ www.gov.uk/government/publications/general-conditions-of-recognition

² www.gov.uk/guidance/regulatory-document-list

Conditions

Condition VTQCov1 Application, Interpretation and definitions

Application

VTQCov1.1 The VTQCov 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.

VTQCov1.2 Any such notice published by Ofqual may –

- (a) be issued in respect of one or more –
 - (i) VTQs, or
 - (ii) VTQCov 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- (b) be varied or withdrawn by Ofqual at any time prior to the date specified in or determined under it, and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.

VTQCov1.3 An awarding organisation must comply with the requirements of any transitional and saving provisions contained in a notice published by Ofqual under Condition VTQCov1.2.

Interpretation and definitions

VTQCov1.4 Unless alternative provision has been made in Condition VTQCov1.8, the following shall apply to the VTQCov 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.

VTQCov1.5 Except in the circumstances described in Condition VTQCov1.6, the requirements imposed by the VTQCov Conditions apply in addition to the requirements imposed by the General Conditions of Recognition and any relevant Qualification Level Conditions and Subject Level Conditions.

VTQCov1.6 To the extent that there is any inconsistency between –

- (a) a requirement of a VTQCov Condition, and
- (b) a requirement of a General Condition of Recognition, a Qualification 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 VTQCov Condition and is not obliged to comply with the requirement of the other Condition.

VTQCov1.7 Unless the context suggests otherwise, in the VTQCov Conditions references to a 'result' means a result for a unit or the VTQ, as relevant.

VTQCov1.8 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 the design, setting, delivery or marking of an assessment for a VTQ that it makes available.

Category 1 Qualification

A qualification designated as a Category 1 Qualification by Ofqual and identified as such on Ofqual's website or on a website made available by or on behalf of Ofqual.

Category 2 Qualification

A qualification designated as a Category 2 Qualification by Ofqual and identified as such on Ofqual's website or on a website made available by or on behalf of Ofqual.

Category 3 Qualification

A qualification designated as a Category 3 Qualification by Ofqual and identified as such on Ofqual's website or on a website made available by or on behalf of Ofqual.

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 VTQCov Conditions.

VTQ

A qualification which is any of the following –

- (a) a Category 1 Qualification,
- (b) a Category 2 Qualification, or
- (c) a Category 3 Qualification.

Condition VTQCov2 Issuing results in summer 2020

VTQCov2.1 In respect of a VTQ 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 registered to take, on or after 20 March 2020, 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.

VTQCov2.2 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.

VTQCov2.3 In respect of each Learner falling within Condition VTQCov2.1(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 VTQCov Conditions.

Condition VTQCov3 Assessments and results for Category 1 Qualifications in summer 2020

VTQCov3.1 In respect of each result issued to a Learner under Condition VTQCov2.1 in respect of a Category 1 Qualification which it makes available, where it cannot currently deliver and/or mark as normal the assessments to be taken for that qualification –

(a) an awarding organisation must take all reasonable steps to ensure that result is calculated –

(i) in compliance with any requirements, and

(ii) having regard to any guidance,

which may be published by Ofqual and revised from time to time,

(b) only where there is insufficient evidence to meet Ofqual's requirements for the calculation of results, an awarding organisation must take all reasonable steps to ensure that result is based on the level of attainment demonstrated by the Learner in an Adapted assessment.

VTQCov3.2 Where an awarding organisation Adapts an assessment under Condition VTQCov3.1(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.

VTQCov3.3 In respect of a Category 1 Qualification which it makes available, an awarding organisation may use a number of different approaches that comply with VTQCov3.1 to arrive at –

(a) an individual Learner's result, where that result is based on more than one Component, and

(b) the results for different Learners taking the same Component.

VTQCov3.4 Where an awarding organisation can currently deliver and/or mark as normal the assessments to be taken for a Category 1 Qualification which it makes available, it may choose to comply with VTQCov3.1 where it considers it appropriate to do so.

Condition VTQCov4 Assessments and results for Category 2 Qualifications in summer 2020

VTQCov4.1 In respect of each result issued to a Learner under Condition VTQCov2.1 in respect of a Category 2 Qualification which it makes available, where it cannot currently deliver and/or mark as normal the assessments to be taken for that qualification, an awarding organisation must –

- (a) having regard to the objective of the qualification, consider whether it is appropriate to issue a calculated result to that Learner,
- (b) where it considers it appropriate to issue a calculated result in respect to that Learner, take all reasonable steps to do so in compliance with any requirements, and having regard to any guidance, which may be published by Ofqual under Condition VTQCov3.1(a),
- (c) only where it does not consider it appropriate to issue a calculated result, or there is insufficient evidence to meet Ofqual's requirements for the calculation of results, take all reasonable steps to ensure that result is based on the level of attainment demonstrated by the Learner in an Adapted assessment.

VTQCov4.2 Where an awarding organisation Adapts an assessment under Condition VTQCov4.1(c), 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 under Condition VTQCov3.2.

VTQCov4.3 Where a VTQ which it makes available contains more than one Component, an awarding organisation must –

- (a) calculate the result of a Component in line with the requirements published under Condition VTQCov3.1(a) where –
 - (i) it considers it appropriate to do so, and
 - (ii) there is sufficient evidence to meet those requirements, and

- (b) base the results for any remaining Components on Adapted assessments that comply with the requirements published under Condition VTQCov3.2.

VTQCov4.4 An awarding organisation may come to different views under Condition VTQCov4.1(a) and (c) in respect of results for different Learners taking the same Component.

VTQCov4.5 Where an awarding organisation can currently deliver and/or mark as normal the assessments to be taken for a Category 2 Qualification which it makes available, it may choose to comply with VTQCov4.1 where it considers it appropriate to do so.

Condition VTQCov5 Assessments and results for Category 3 Qualifications in summer 2020

VTQCov5.1 In respect of each result issued to a Learner under Condition VTQCov2.1 in respect of a Category 3 qualification which it makes available, where it cannot currently deliver and/or mark as normal the assessments to be taken for that qualification, an awarding organisation must take all reasonable steps to ensure –

- (a) that result is based on the level of attainment demonstrated by the Learner in an Adapted assessment, and
- (b) it Adapts that assessment –
 - (i) in compliance with any requirements, and
 - (ii) having regard to any guidance,

which may be published by Ofqual under Condition VTQCov3.2.

VTQCov5.2 Where an awarding organisation can currently deliver and/or mark as normal the assessments to be taken for a Category 3 Qualification which it makes available, it may choose to comply with VTQCov5.1 where it considers it appropriate to do so.

Condition VTQCov6 Support for Centres

VTQCov6.1 An awarding organisation must –

- (a) provide effective guidance to a Centre –
 - (i) on the provision of any information that the awarding organisation requires from the Centre in order to calculate a Learner's result in line with the requirements published under Condition VTQCov3.1(a), and
 - (ii) which the Centre may reasonably require in relation to an Adapted assessment provided by the awarding organisation under Condition VTQCov3.1(b), 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.

Condition VTQCov7 Principles to be applied

VTQCov7.1 An awarding organisation must ensure that in complying with Conditions VTQCov3, VTQCov4 and VTQCov5, it takes all reasonable steps to –

- (a) comply with the principles published by Ofqual and revised from time to time, and
- (b) 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 VTQCov8 Keeping a record of decision-making

VTQCov8.1 In relation to a VTQ which it makes available, an awarding organisation must –

- (a) maintain a record, as relevant, of –
 - (i) the reasons why it cannot provide a result in line with Conditions VTQCov3, VTQCov4 and VTQCov5,
 - (ii) the method and evidence it has used to calculate a result in line with the requirements published under Condition VTQCov3.1(a), and the weight given to that evidence,
 - (iii) the decisions it has made in Adapting an assessment in compliance with the requirements, and having regard to the guidance, published under Condition VTQCov3.2,
 - (iv) how it has complied with Condition VTQCov7.1, including, in particular how it has sought to balance compliance with the principles in line with Condition VTQCov7.1(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
- (b) maintain that record in a form specified in any requirements that may be published by Ofqual and revised from time to time, and
- (c) provide that record to Ofqual upon request.

Condition VTQCov9 Information to be provided to Centres

VTQCov9.1 In relation to a VTQ which it makes available, the methods adopted by an awarding organisation to arrive at a result for a Learner under Conditions VTQCov3, VTQCov4 and VTQCov5, 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.

VTQCov9.2 An awarding organisation must establish, maintain and comply with arrangements which –

- (a) must require the information set out in Condition VTQCov9.3 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.

VTQCov9.3 The information to be provided under those arrangements is –

- (a) the information used to calculate the result issued to a Learner in line with the requirements published under Condition VTQCov3.1(a), and
- (b) the Adaptations that an awarding organisation has made to a VTQ in line with the requirements published under Condition VTQCov3.2.

VTQCov9.4 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.

VTQCov9.5 The arrangements may –

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- (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 VTQCov10 Assessment opportunity in autumn 2020

VTQCov10.1 In respect of the assessments to be taken for a VTQ which it makes available, an awarding organisation must ensure that –

- (a) where it normally provides an opportunity between September and December of any year for Learners to take those assessments, it takes all reasonable steps to provide that opportunity in 2020 to each Learner –
 - (i) to whom it would normally provide that opportunity,
 - (ii) who was issued with a result under the VTQCov Conditions, and
 - (iii) who was registered or due to take an assessment, on or after 20 March 2020, 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 December of any year for Learners to complete those assessments, it provides such an opportunity in 2020 to those Learners set out in Condition VTQCov10.1(a) where it reasonably considers that sufficient demand for that opportunity exists.

VTQCov10.2 The requirement in Condition VTQCov10.1(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.

VTQCov10.3 An awarding organisation must seek to ensure that its approach to an assessment provided under Condition VTQCov10.1 –

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

VTQCov10.4 An awarding organisation must comply with any requirements specified to it by Ofqual in relation to the provision of assessment opportunities for VTQs.

VTQCov10.5 In respect of each assessment it delivers under Conditions
VTQCov10.1 and VTQCov10.3 –

- (a) an awarding organisation is not required to comply with Conditions VTQCov2 to VTQCov9, and
- (b) Condition VTQCov1.6 does not apply.

Condition VTQCov11 Technical Advice Notices

VTQCov11.1 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 VTQCov11.1 within the timescale specified in that Technical Advice Notice.

Requirements in relation to the calculation of results for Category 1 Qualifications and Category 2 Qualifications

Condition VTQCov3.1(a) allows us to specify requirements and guidance in relation to the calculation of results to be issued for Category 1 Qualifications in summer 2020.

Those requirements also apply to the calculation of results for Category 2 Qualifications under Condition VTQCov4.1(b).

We set out our requirements in relation to calculated results for Category 1 Qualifications and Category 2 Qualifications below.

Application period

In accordance with VTQCov2.1, in respect of a VTQ which it makes available, an awarding organisation must ensure that it takes all reasonable steps to issue a result to each Learner who was due to take, on or after 20 March 2020, an assessment that would have led to the issue of a result. Where calculated results are to be issued, this would only apply to assessments that would have been taken by Learners between 20 March 2020 and 31 July 2020.

Overall approach

In considering its approach to the provision of calculated results for a Category 1 Qualification or Category 2 Qualification that it makes available, an awarding organisation must –

- (1) identify the relevant evidence that is both currently available and potentially available in respect of the qualification as a whole and each Learner taking it,
- (2) evaluate the quality of that evidence and hence the weight that can be placed on it,
- (3) establish and comply with an approach to the calculation of results which –
 - (a) places most weight on the highest quality evidence in calculating individual results,
 - (b) includes quality assurance of individual results, and
 - (c) includes a check on the overall results profile for the qualification to ensure that standards are comparable with previous years.

Different sources of evidence

For each qualification, an awarding organisation must identify both the available and potentially available evidence in respect of the qualification as a whole and each Learner taking it.

This evidence includes sources that may be used for the calculation of individual results and in an awarding organisation's quality assurance process.

An awarding organisation must consider –

- (a) the availability of the sources of evidence set out in Table 1,
- (b) the weight to be accorded to, or trust placed in, that evidence, where available, in relation to the qualification as a whole and each Learner taking it, and
- (c) the use to which that evidence may be put, where available, in relation to the calculation of results in respect of the qualification as a whole and each Learner taking it.

Table 1. Sources of evidence

	Category / Source of evidence	Description	Factors relevant to the evaluation of weight to be placed on the evidence	Implications for use in an approach to calculated results
1	Banked Component marks and grades ³	Marks and/or grades for completed assessments in Components to date. This includes – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • external assessments,⁴ and • internal assessments⁵ where the marks or grades have been subject to Centre Assessment Standards Scrutiny. 	Banked Component marks and grades are the means by which a final result will usually be derived for the qualification in other years. Such marks and grades will have been subject to the awarding organisation's normal quality assurance processes. As such, this evidence should always be given the highest degree of trust, subject to the final quality assurance check described in these requirements.	Where this evidence exists, it should always form part of the basis for the final qualification result, either as a contributory element alongside other sources of evidence, or as a basis on which to calculate results for Components for which a Learner does not yet have a result ('missing Components').
2	Internal assessment marks and grades not yet subject to Centre Assessment Standards Scrutiny	Internal assessment marks or grades which have been generated by a Centre, but which have not been subject to Centre Assessment Standards Scrutiny by the awarding organisation.	An awarding organisation must consider – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the completeness of the evidence generated by Learners, • the reliability of the Centre's marking in previous years, and 	Where the awarding organisation considers there to be a sufficient degree of trust in the Centre's marks or grades, it is likely to be appropriate for them to

³ In these requirements, we use 'grades' to refer to specified levels of attainment such as A, B, C, for example, or Pass, Merit and Distinction.

⁴ In these requirements, an 'external assessment' refers to an assessment set and marked by the awarding organisation. This includes assessments by examination, written tests, performances or written materials where the task is set and marked by the awarding organisation. An assessment by examination is an assessment which is (i) set by an awarding organisation, (ii) designed to be taken simultaneously by all relevant Learners at a time determined by the awarding organisation, and (iii) taken under conditions specified by the awarding organisation (including conditions relating to the supervision of Learners during assessment and the duration of the assessment).

⁵ 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.

	Category / Source of evidence	Description	Factors relevant to the evaluation of weight to be placed on the evidence	Implications for use in an approach to calculated results
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the Centre's familiarity with the relevant assessments and the marking criteria. 	<p>contribute to the final qualification result, either as a contributory component alongside other sources of evidence, or as a basis on which to calculate results for missing Components.</p>
3	<p>Information provided by Centres in relation to likely performance</p>	<p>An awarding organisation may ask a Centre to provide a judgement about the result that each Learner is most likely to have achieved.</p> <p>Depending upon the structure of the qualification and the proportion of Components already completed, a Centre could be asked to provide a view in relation to the Learner's likely performance in –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> individual Components for which the Learner has not taken an assessment, or the qualification overall. <p>An awarding organisation may also ask a Centre for other information in order to support the calculation of results, such as a rank order for Learners. This could include an overall rank order of Learners or a rank order of Learners in each grade.</p>	<p>In assessing the weight to be given to information provided by a Centre about Learner's likely performance an awarding organisation must consider –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the delivery model used and whether the Centre has good formative information or assessment data on its Learners, the longevity of a qualification and the likely familiarity of the Centre with the qualification, including previous Centre outcomes. the degree of regular contact between the awarding organisation and the Centre, including through providing guidance and standardisation activities, any historical data collected by the awarding organisation that indicates the accuracy of estimated or predicted results 	<p>Information provided by Centres in relation to Learners' likely performance will usually be very useful where sufficient trust can be placed in it.</p> <p>The methods of quality assurance used by an awarding organisation in relation to the calculated result must reflect the level of trust that it places in this evidence.</p>

	Category / Source of evidence	Description	Factors relevant to the evaluation of weight to be placed on the evidence	Implications for use in an approach to calculated results
			<p>previously provided by the Centre for the qualification or a Component,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the design of the qualification, for example whether, in a highly modular qualification, the level of trust in information provided by the Centre in relation to individual Component grades is higher than for information provided in relation to likely performance in the qualification overall, and • any other relevant information to which the awarding organisation has access. 	
4	Historical data about qualification functioning	Analysis of historical relationships between different Components within the qualification may show that performance in one Component is highly predictive of performance in another Component. These sorts of analyses may take the form of correlational analyses or more sophisticated analyses.	The degree of weight placed on this evidence will depend on the strength of the correlation between Learners' performance in different Components. This will in turn depend on the nature and robustness of the analysis.	Where there is sufficient trust, this evidence may be particularly useful – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to calculate results for any missing Components where a reasonable proportion of evidence generated by Learners is already banked, and/or • in the quality assurance of information provided by Centres in relation to Learners' likely performance.

	Category / Source of evidence	Description	Factors relevant to the evaluation of weight to be placed on the evidence	Implications for use in an approach to calculated results
5	Historical Centre data	<p>This includes a range of data and information that an awarding organisation may hold on a particular Centre.</p> <p>One useful example is likely to be analyses of qualification outcomes at Centre level to understand the degree of stability or variability over time.</p> <p>There may be other information available which can form part of quality assurance of information provided by a Centre such as –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centre risk profiles, • information from visits by the awarding organisation to the Centre, and • records of any investigations in relation to the Centre. 	<p>Stable outcomes at Centre level are likely to warrant greater trust given their greater predictive value.</p> <p>The degree of trust placed in all types of historical Centre data will vary depending on factors such as recency and completeness.</p>	<p>Historical evidence of Centre performance may be useful for outlining expectations about the likely distribution of results outcomes that can be used for –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • calculation of results for Learners at the Centre by the awarding organisation, • a starting point for Centres in providing information in relation to Learners' likely performance to the awarding organisation, or • quality assurance of such information provided by a Centre.
6	Prior attainment data	<p>For some qualifications, data on the prior attainment of Learners in a previous assessment may be available and may be used routinely by the awarding organisation in its usual maintenance of standards.</p> <p>For Level 2 qualifications, this is likely to be Key Stage 2 data or Level 1 qualification data. For Level 3 qualifications, it is likely to be 'mean</p>	<p>Where the relationship between prior attainment data and qualification outcomes is well understood by the awarding organisation and has been shown to be predictive, then a higher degree of weight must be placed on such evidence.</p> <p>Where there is weak or no evidence that it is predictive of qualification outcomes (e.g. low correlational values) less weight must be placed on the evidence.</p>	<p>Where a high degree of trust can be placed in it, the use of such evidence will be most appropriate in the context of -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deriving Centre profiles of Learner results or • for quality assurance of any information provided by a Centre in

	Category / Source of evidence	Description	Factors relevant to the evaluation of weight to be placed on the evidence	Implications for use in an approach to calculated results
		GCSE' or other Level 2 qualification data.	An awarding organisation must consider whether its qualification is testing different constructs and abilities to the assessment for which historical data is held.	<p>relation to Learners' likely performance.</p> <p>Such evidence must not be used to provide a direct basis for calculating individual Learner's results.</p>

We have not included in the above table evidence generated by Learners which has not yet been marked by either a Centre or an awarding organisation. This is because, in view of the current statutory restrictions on the operation of Centres and on people's movement in general, it is likely that few Centres could organise collection and dispatch of Learners' evidence to awarding organisations.

However, where such evidence has already been provided to a Centre or an awarding organisation it may be used as appropriate.

Alternatively, where it can be collected in the future, such evidence may be used as part of an awarding organisation's quality assurance process.

Developing an approach which maximises the most trusted evidence

Once an awarding organisation has identified and evaluated the sources of evidence available to it, or which it can secure within the required timeframe, it must develop an approach to calculating results that places greatest weight on the most trusted evidence.

That approach must comprise two elements using the relevant evidence –

- (a) the initial calculation of each Learner's result, and
- (b) a quality assurance check on that initial calculation.

The additional overall check on outcomes at qualification level is discussed in the next section.

Minimum evidential threshold

An awarding organisation must ensure that its approach uses at least one source of reasonably trusted evidence along with a sufficiently robust basis for quality assurance.

This means that where there is –

- (a) little or no banked Component data,
- (b) insufficient trust in information provided by a Centre in relation to Learners' likely performance, and
- (c) little opportunity or evidence to undertake quality assurance of that evidence,

an awarding organisation may determine that it is unable to issue a calculated result which has sufficient validity and reliability to meet Principles 1 and 2 as set out under Condition VTQCov7.1.

In addition to its evaluation at qualification level, an awarding organisation must consider whether there are some Learners, but not others, for whom the available evidence does not meet the minimum threshold.

Where the available evidence does not meet the minimum threshold, an awarding organisation must instead meet the requirements of Condition VTQCov3.2, as relevant –

- (a) in relation to the qualification as a whole, or
- (b) in relation to individual Learners.

It should be noted that Condition VTQCov3.2 is an obligation to take all reasonable steps to meet the requirements set out under that Condition. There may be some cases where, because of the disproportionate burden involved, it is not reasonable for an awarding organisation to provide Adapted assessments for a minority of Learners taking a qualification in circumstances where it must also provide calculated results for the majority.

In such cases, under Condition VTQCov8.1(a), 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 and why it would be a disproportionate burden to provide Adapted assessments for them. An awarding organisation must also meet the requirements of Condition VTQCov10.1 in relation to such Learners.

Differences in available evidence for Learners taking the same qualification

As discussed above, there may be cases where, for some Learners taking a qualification, insufficient evidence is available which meets the minimum threshold.

For certain qualifications, even where evidence does meet that threshold, the range of evidence available may not be uniform for all Learners, particularly where there is a high degree of variability in –

- (a) how the course of teaching for a qualification is delivered by Centres,
- (b) the point at which Learners are entered for assessments or
- (c) how Centre Assessment Standards Scrutiny 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 evidence to calculate results for different Learners, and
- (b) must ensure, as part of its quality assurance, that the different methods of calculation used for different Learners do not systematically advantage or disadvantage those Learners.

Information provided by Centres

An awarding organisation must ensure that any information provided by a Centre in relation to Learners' likely performance that it uses to calculate results is based on knowledge and evidence held by the Centre including, where available –

- (a) the level of attainment of previous Learners at the Centre in assessments for the qualification,
- (b) relevant differences in the profile of Learners in the current cohort at the Centre in comparison with previous cohorts,
- (c) previous formal and informal assessments for current Learners,
- (d) mock examinations for current Learners, and
- (e) classwork and homework for current Learners.

An awarding organisation must ensure that the Centre considers each Learner's performance over the course of study and makes a realistic judgement of the result that Learner would have been most likely to receive if he or she had completed the relevant Component or qualification. This should include U (ungraded) or fail outcomes, where used.

An awarding organisation must ensure that Centres also consider the likely impact of any Reasonable Adjustment to which a Learner would have had access. For example, if a Learner qualifies for extra time in an assessment by examination, in the information it provides in respect of that Learner, the Centre must reflect how it considers the Learner would have performed having the full amount of time to which he or she would have been entitled.

More broadly, an awarding organisation must instruct Centres to make their judgements in an impartial, balanced and unbiased way such that, as far as possible,

the information provided by them avoids bias and Learners are not systematically advantaged or disadvantaged by having or not having a Characteristic or special educational needs.

An awarding organisation must instruct a Centre only to provide information in respect of a Learner for which it has sufficient evidence.

An awarding organisation must ensure that the information provided to it by a Centre 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.

Under Condition VTQCov9.1, 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 calculate results.

Quality assurance of information provided by Centres

Where information provided by Centres in relation to Learners' likely performance is used as part of the overall approach to calculating results, the awarding organisation must undertake quality assurance that draws upon other sources of trusted evidence, where available, such as historical Centre performance profiles, Centre risk profiles or predictions based on the banked Component data.

The best quality assurance approaches are likely to build in more than one source of trusted evidence. Larger and more established qualifications are likely to have more sources of evidence available to contribute to a quality assurance approach.

The quality assurance approach must be used by the awarding organisation, where necessary, to –

- (a) challenge the Centre to provide additional evidence to support its judgements, and/or
- (b) directly adjust the Centre's suggested results itself for the purposes of standardisation.

Examples of approaches that may be used to calculate and quality assure results

Example 1

Where there is a relatively high proportion of banked Component data, this may be used as a direct basis for the calculation of Learners' results for missing Components. This is often a method that is used in ordinary circumstances where it has been determined that a Learner is 'absent with good reason' and receives an 'aegrotat' award through the normal application of Special Consideration by the awarding organisation.

There may be a number of different ways of calculating results for the missing Components, such as –

- (a) assigning the average of all the available Component results, or
- (b) weighting some Components more than others.

Where there is a high proportion of banked Component data, the aggregation might be completed without calculating a separate result for any missing Component.

In choosing its method of calculation an awarding organisation must test different approaches to satisfy itself that the adopted approach represents the fairest method of calculating results. In doing so, an awarding organisation must use historical data from previous series and previous years where this is available and judged to have sufficient weight to be useful.

This process of exploring different ways of calculating results represents one form of quality assurance. In addition, wherever possible, quality assurance must take account of whether the selected approach might have a negative impact on a particular group of Learners and, if so, how that might be mitigated.

Example 2

A qualification may have a relatively low proportion of banked Component data, but the awarding organisation has a high level of trust in information provided by Centres in relation to Learners' likely performance, either for the missing or incomplete Components or for the qualification overall.

In this example, the quality assurance method should draw upon other sources of trusted evidence such as historical Centre performance profiles, Centre risk profiles or predictions based on the banked Component data available.

Overall check on outcomes

As set out in the direction in relation to VTQs given to Ofqual on 9 April 2020 by the Secretary of State,⁶ the results issued for such qualifications this spring and summer should maintain standards that are broadly comparable with previous years.

In addition to the quality assurance of individual Learner's calculated results, an awarding organisation must ensure that its approach includes a check on whether the results profile for the qualification as a whole is in line with expectations based on previous years and other relevant information.

That check must be undertaken prior to the issue of results. If there is a material difference in the results profile compared to previous years, an awarding organisation must re-evaluate its calculated results at Learner level and its approach to quality assurance.

An awarding organisation must also ensure that when developing its approach to quality assurance it takes into account the check on outcomes in order to minimise the risk that there is substantial inconsistency between the quality assured results and the expected results profile.

⁶

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/879024/Letter_from_Secretary_of_State_for_Education_to_Sally_Collier_-_VTQs_-_9_April_2020.pdf

Requirements in relation to the Adaptation of assessments for VTQs

Condition VTQCov3.2 allows us to specify requirements and guidance in relation to assessments for Category 1 Qualifications in spring and summer 2020.

Those requirements also apply to assessments for Category 2 Qualifications under Condition VTQCov4.2 and Category 3 Qualifications under Condition VTQCov5.1.

We set out our requirements in relation to assessments in spring and summer 2020 for VTQs below.

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 maximise the number of Learners that receive results this spring and summer. These include –

- (a) 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,
- (b) adapting assessment methods, for example by using a practical simulation in place of an observation, or professional discussion in place of a practical demonstration,
- (c) changing Invigilation requirements, for example by allowing the use of online Invigilation so that assessments can take place in a wider range of settings,
- (d) waiving or adjusting work experience or placement requirements, for example allowing Learners to undertake a shorter period of work experience, or
- (e) 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 in relation to an assessment for a VTQ are in line with the principles set out under Condition VTQCov7.1.

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.

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

Where an awarding organisation does not reasonably consider that any Adaptations that it can make will result in an assessment that provides valid and reliable results, it should not seek to provide such an assessment. It should instead delay the provision of assessments.

Equalities considerations

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.

However, an awarding organisation must not refrain from providing an Adapted assessment simply because the provision of that assessment gives rise to an unavoidable disadvantage to Learners with a Characteristic or special educational needs.

In all cases, an awarding organisation must comply with the requirements of Condition D2 and Condition G6.

Professional qualifications and licences to practise

Where 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 maximise the number of results that can be issued to Learners in line with the principles set out under Condition VTQCov7.1.

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 to assessment and the issue of results. 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 in relation to an assessment for 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.

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 VTQCov7.1.

Principles to be applied

Condition VTQCov7.1 allows us to specify principles with which an awarding organisation must comply in calculating results and Adapting assessments for VTQs, as well as the balance to be achieved when those principles conflict.

We set out the principles, and the balance to be achieved between them, for the purposes of Condition VTQCov7.1 below.

The principles

Principle 1 – An awarding organisation must seek to issue results in spring and summer 2020 that –

(a) meet the requirements of the VTQCov 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 VTQ which it makes available.

Principle 2 – 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) the Learner's potential level of attainment in summer 2020, where that result is calculated, and

(b) in all other cases, the Learner's level of attainment as demonstrated in an assessment for the qualification.

Principle 3 – An awarding organisation must seek to ensure that its approach –

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

Principle 5 – 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 balance between the principles

The principles are arranged in a hierarchy with Principle 1 at the top and Principle 5 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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