

ANALYSIS OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES

The General Qualifications Alternative Awarding Framework

Consultation on Conditions and Requirements for
GCSE, GCE, AEA and Project qualifications in
summer 2021

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Introduction

Following our joint consultation with the Department for Education (DfE) we announced our [policy decisions in respect of the awarding of GCSE, AS and A level qualifications in summer 2021](#). We must now set a framework of conditions and requirements that awarding organisations must meet to deliver and award qualifications in accordance with those policy decisions.

This is the summary of responses to our [consultation on the framework of conditions and requirements](#) that ran between 25 February to 11 March. We received 242 completed responses, including one that did not use the standard response form.

In this consultation we also sought views about two draft documents that will be published to support centres ([‘centre guidance’](#) and [‘objectivity guidance’](#)).

Background

We consulted jointly with DfE on the proposals for the awarding of GCSE, AS and A level qualifications (GQ qualifications) in summer 2021. We also consulted with DfE on a proposed approach for vocational and technical qualifications.

We announced our [decisions following that consultation](#) on 25 February and now seek to set conditions, requirements and guidance which implement those policy decisions by regulating how the exam boards will issue results for the qualifications this summer. The technical consultation sought views on our proposals for conditions and requirements in respect of GQ qualifications. A separate technical consultation sought views on our proposed conditions and requirements for VTQ qualifications.

The General Qualifications Alternative Awarding Framework

We proposed to set an extraordinary regulatory framework to be known as the General Qualifications Alternative Awarding Framework (GQAA) which was reproduced as [Annex C to the consultation](#).

The proposed GQAA includes the conditions which set the high-level framework for awarding GQ qualifications this summer. Further details of the steps an awarding organisation must take before results are issued was set out in the requirements.

The ‘centre guidance’ and the ‘objectivity guidance’

We proposed setting requirements under Condition GQAA3.2(a) in relation to the determination of results. We set out in greater detail the steps we considered an

awarding organisation must take to realise our policy decisions in relation to the determination of results.

Many of our policy decisions reflect actions which will be taken by teachers and leaders at schools and colleges (centres). We do not regulate centres and cannot impose requirements on them or their staff. Instead, we require an awarding organisation to have in place a written and enforceable agreement with each centre which delivers its qualifications. We will specify what must be included in that agreement, as well as requiring awarding organisations to monitor and enforce compliance with the agreement.

We asked specific questions in relation to the two draft documents that will be published to support centres (the 'centre guidance' and the 'objectivity guidance').

Approach to analysis

The consultation was published on our website and available for response, using the online form, between 25 February and 11 March 2021.

We present our summary of responses to the consultation questions in the order in which they were asked. Respondents could choose to answer all or just some of the questions. This means that the total number responding to each question varies; the details are provided for each question. In many cases, responses indicated that no further comment was needed and, as a result, the analysis is based on a smaller number of responses than it would initially appear had been received.

Respondents were invited to indicate the capacity in which they were responding.

Some themes emerged in response to more than one question. Wherever possible we have included them in the analysis of one question only and cross-referenced to the theme from other questions.

Respondents were invited to confine their responses to this consultation to the proposed framing of the conditions and requirements, as well as the draft centre guidance and draft objectivity guidance. We read all responses in full but have not included in our analysis any responses which concerned only the underpinning policy decisions, which are now settled.

Many of the responses to this consultation raised concerns with the policy decisions that have been taken in relation to private candidates and/or the details of delivering those arrangements. All responses have been read and the concerns raised have been noted. Responses related to matters that lie outside of the remit of this consultation are not included in this report.

Where we have included quotes to illustrate the main themes identified, we have edited some for clarity, brevity and to preserve anonymity but we have been careful

not to change their meaning. We have not included comments made about underlying policy decisions.

Who responded

We received 242 responses to the consultation including one that did not use the standard response form.

We have given a detailed breakdown of the organisations that responded to the consultation in Appendix A. The following table is a summary of respondents by type.

Official responses	Number of respondents
Academy chain	4
Awarding body or exam board	6
Local authority	2
Other representative or interest group	15
Private training provider	1
School or college	42
University or higher education institute	1
Total	71

Personal responses	Number of respondents
Consultant	3
Examiner	1
Exams officer or manager	15
Other	7
Parent or carer	13
SLT (Senior leadership team)	44
Student	12
Student - private, home-educated of any age	21
Teacher	54
Total	170

This was a public consultation on the views of those who wished to participate. We recognise that the responses are not necessarily representative of the general public or any specific group.

Detailed analysis

Question 1

Do you have any comments on proposed Condition GQAA1?

We received 122 responses to this question. Over half of respondents simply indicated that they were satisfied with these requirements or noted that they had no comments to make. We summarise below the remaining responses – those which relate to Condition GQAA1.

Application

The most frequent response in relation to ‘application’ was that the GQAA Framework should be time limited, with a specified end date. Some suggested an autumn exam series could be the point at which the GQAA Conditions cease to apply.

“These arrangements create a system very different to the normal exam procedures, with considerable disruption to everyone concerned. If this framework is not time limited it produces uncertainty about the validity of future exam preparations. Policy decisions should be explicitly made about any adjustments to future exam series, not created through allowing 2021 arrangements to remain in place beyond the period in which they have been considered and consulted on. Therefore the alternative awarding framework should have a set time period, possibly ending with the autumn exam series.”
(Other representative or interest group)

“The alternative awarding framework is appropriate for the summer 2021 series of exams following government policy to cancel exams. However, the disruption to everyone involved is huge and should not be repeated unless mandated to be done so again as government policy. Therefore, the framework for the summer 2021 exam series should be time limited to the summer 2021 exam series only. This time limit will create stability and eliminate uncertainty about future exam preparations.” (Other)

“These arrangements should be a one off response to a very unusual situation. Ofqual's remit is to uphold standards and these arrangements make it extremely difficult to do so [...] The alternative awarding framework should have a set time period, possibly ending with the autumn exam series.” (Student – private, home-educated of any age)

A few respondents expressed views or raised questions about the qualifications to which the GQAA Framework will apply.

“Are you also including the L2 further maths qualification from AQA which is technically not a GCSE but works in the same way and was included last year?” (Teacher – responding in a personal capacity)

“The arrangements should also apply to IGCSE and AQA Level 2 Further Mathematics for consistency.” (SLT – Senior leadership team)

“All level 2 and 3 examinations/assessments should be taken into consideration” (School or college)

“Annex C is not at all clear and needs to have a summary written in clear and precise language explaining which examinations and which boards and which candidates the proposals for GQAA1 are relevant to and what the judgements are about these qualifications and candidates” (Teacher – responding in a personal capacity)

Interpretation

One exam board offering GCSE and A level qualifications agreed with the proposal on interpretation.

“[...] We support the proposal that that the General Conditions of Recognition, Qualification Level Conditions and relevant Subject Level Conditions should continue to apply alongside the GQAA Framework and that, where there is an inconsistency, the requirement in the GQAA Framework will prevail.” (Awarding body or exam board)

Two exam boards offering GCSE and A level qualifications considered that Ofqual should disapply relevant Conditions (the rules to which awarding organisations are always subject), for the purposes of clarity. One of these respondents added that if

this were not to happen, then Ofqual should take a reasonable approach to any regulatory activity.

“[...] We continue to believe that the disapplication of certain Conditions would be appropriate, would provide greater clarity and diminish the risk to awarding organisations of being found to be non-compliant should there be nuanced/grey area of compliance with GQAA or other Conditions. [...] If Ofqual does not feel it is possible to disapply conditions to provide regulatory clarity, then we would hope it could clearly commit to taking a reasonable and pragmatic regulatory approach should any situations arise where an AO has had to make a judgement on whether compliance with a General Condition is possible in tandem with compliance with the GQAA requirements.” (Awarding body or exam board)

Some comments from other respondent groups also expressed views on interpretation, emphasising the need for parameters and support to ensure a consistent approach to exam boards’ considerations of what provisions elsewhere in our regulatory framework are temporarily suspended with respect to this summer.

“What support will be given to awarding organisations making such decisions to ensure there are no inconsistencies?” (SLT - Senior leadership team)

Definitions

Some respondents indicated they agreed with the proposed definitions of a Private Candidate and Relevant Centre.

“I agree with the definition of a private learner” (Student – private, home-educated of any age)

“As a home educated young person, my son enters exams as a Private Candidate. I agree with the proposed new definitions for Private Candidate and Relevant Centre.” (Other)

Some respondents raised concerns about the proposed definitions of Private Candidate and Relevant Centre, noting that some resitting or home-educated students may have previously had a connection with a centre. It was suggested that if such students do not fall within the definitions, this could result in centres being required to take on candidates when they do not have capacity to do so. One respondent suggested that judgements in relation to part (b) of the proposed definition of Relevant Centre would be subjective.

“The definitions of ‘Private Candidate’ and a ‘Relevant Centre’ indicate that candidates who were previously at a school or college but are no longer enrolled would not be considered ‘private candidates’ under the terms of the proposed framework, as they would have been previously. [Organisation] has consistently said that while provision must be made for all private candidates to receive a grade this summer, no centre should be obligated to enter private candidates, including former students, if they do have the capacity or resource to undertake further assessment of that learner. We would want reassurance that the definitions of ‘Private Candidate’ and ‘Relevant Centre’ do not undermine this.” (Other representative or interest group)

“We agree with the definition of a Private Candidate. [Our] response is specifically considering home educated young people taking exams. The majority of these will do so in a situation where they are Private Candidates, though some may have had more of a relationship with a Relevant Centre, and be considered as internal Learners.” (Other representative or interest group)

“The definition of a Private Candidate does not appear to work as drafted. Private Candidates will need to work with a Centre in order to receive a TAG, even where they would not in ordinary circumstances usually be students there. As drafted, it apparently relies on part (b) of the definition of Relevant Centre to differentiate them from other Learners but to do so puts a good deal of reliance on the meaning of ‘materially contributing to the preparation’, which is a subjective judgement and may vary across the piece. This might helpfully be clarified by reference to guided learning hours or to the delivery of teaching or to actual/virtual attendance.” (Awarding body or exam board)

Question 2

Do you have any comments on proposed Condition GQAA2?

We received 148 responses to this question. Some respondents simply indicated that they were satisfied with these requirements or noted that they had no comments to make. We summarise below the remaining responses – those which relate to Condition GQAA2.

Assessments under the GQAA Framework

Few respondents commented on the proposal that exams for the GQ qualifications Ofqual regulates should be prevented throughout the UK this summer and the proposed Condition GQAA2.1(a). Those that did indicated support for the proposed Condition.

“It seems reasonable that exams should not take place in the UK in 2021 so all students are treated the same way. The exception would be an Autumn series.”
(Teacher – responding in a personal capacity)

“We agree with the proposed wording of Condition GQAA2.1(a) which states that awarding organisations must ensure that learners in the UK do not take assessment by examination.” (Awarding body or exam board)

Some respondents raised concerns that the proposed Condition GQAA2.1(a) could be misunderstood to impose a prohibition not just on exams, but on other forms of assessment. This was raised in particular in the context of private candidates needing to be able to access such assessments. Respondents said the distinction should be made clear.

“There is a huge risk that this condition will be misunderstood. I suspect by "examination" that you mean a public exam sat in the usual way. But by not carefully defining "examination" people may mistakenly believe that you mean that any type of controlled assessment or mock exam is not allowed. As controlled assessments under exam conditions are likely to be a key input into Teacher Assessed Grades, you must make clear that this is allowed and is different from a formal public exam.” (Student – private, home-educated of any age)

“[...] any cancellation of exams needs to make sure that controlled assessments are not just able to take place but are a preferable response. Controlled assessments, besides helping to provide valid and reliable grades, will widen participation by making it easier for centres to facilitate private candidates.”
(Teacher – responding in a personal capacity)

A few respondents expressed views that assessments in anything similar to the usual form of exams should not be permitted.

“The rationale behind the decision that exams be prevented should also apply to private candidates. Centres should not be allowed to set on-site "mock" exams (for example using locked past papers) to gain evidence for private candidates, as this amounts in practice to the setting and sitting of examinations.” (Student – private, home-educated of any age)

“Commenting on GQAA2.1(a) [...]: Centres should be discouraged from imposing mock exams encompassing the entire syllabus and conducted under full exam conditions on learners. Some centres are expecting completion (in person) of the full suite of papers as in a normal year, under invigilated conditions, but sat in April and May instead of June, and will be relying almost exclusively on this to provide learners CAGs. This is in all effect re-imposing examinations for GQ qualifications despite their cancellation, and with less preparation time than usual, while ignoring other sources of learners' evidence and prior assessment.”
(Teacher – responding in a personal capacity)

Moderation of Non-Exam Assessment

Most comments in response to this question related to part (b) of the proposed Condition GQAA2.1, on moderation of non-exam assessment (NEA).

We confirmed on 25 February that completed and partially completed NEA should contribute to the Teacher Assessed Grade, and that there would be no requirement for exam boards to moderate NEA. While some respondents commented only on the decisions already confirmed, rather than the proposed wording of GQAA2 (b) that will give effect to these, others provided a view on whether moderation should or should not take place with specific reference to the proposed Condition GQAA2 (b).

Some respondents indicated they would prefer that NEA is moderated, for consistency across centres and to limit grade inflation. There were suggestions that evidence should be retained for possible sampling, and that there could be an option for submitting marked work to the exam boards for feedback on the standard.

“I do feel that there is still a need for awarding bodies to complete some moderation of some pieces of NEA in order to provide consistency in assessment” (SLT – Senior leadership team)

“*An awarding organisation may, but is not required to, Moderate an assessment for a GQ Qualification*’ could do with some bones. Surely there needs to be a requirement for a broad moderation?” (Academy chain)

“Some requirement to hold NEA work for possible sampling by boards would aid in encouraging schools not to overinflate grades (SLT – Senior leadership team)”

Some respondents were concerned that leaving it open for each exam board to decide whether or not to moderate NEA could lead to inconsistent approaches and therefore unfairness for students, and also confusion for centres. It was suggested that clarity is needed on what is and is not permitted, and also that it may be preferable for Condition GQAA2.1(b) explicitly to require exam boards not to moderate NEA.

“You have stated ‘may’ be moderated. This implies that exam boards could request a sample. At this time, I believe that this would be an unnecessary additional burden on schools.” (SLT – Senior leadership team)

“NEA should be used as part of the grade and not moderated by the awarding body. If students have not been able to complete the NEA the students should not be penalised.” (School or college)

Some respondents expressed a view that the proposed wording of Condition GQAA2.1(b) is inconsistent with the decisions already confirmed in relation to moderation of NEA.

“Part b) does not seem to be consistent with the information on page 8 that moderation of NEAs is suspended. This requires further clarification.” (Other representative or interest group)

All four exam boards offering GCSE and A level qualifications indicated their preference that Condition GQAA2.1(b) does not leave decisions on moderation of NEA open to exam boards, with two suggesting alternative wording that they considered would be preferable.

“We do not understand why an awarding organisation may moderate an assessment for a GQ Qualification, considering the flexibilities afforded to centres this summer, and how such moderation would be fair to all candidates, as it could only be an optional service. We therefore suggest that the Condition GQAA 2.1 (b) is changed to “an awarding organisation is not required to moderate an assessment for a GQ Qualification.” (Awarding body or exam board)

One organisation offering EPQ qualifications, but not GCSE or A level qualifications, highlighted that the wording in GQAA2.1(b) in relation to moderation may cause confusion in its application to EPQs.

“Condition GQAA2 includes that ‘an awarding organisation may, but is not required to, moderate an assessment for a GQ Qualification’. This makes moderation appear optional, whereas the requirements state that ‘all results must be based on a Teacher Assessed Grade’. For qualifications that are assessed entirely through NEA, like the Extended Project, this could be confusing. Last year we did have a centre who wished to continue to offer the Extended Project as normal and for it to be moderated as normal, so it is important to have clarity.” (Awarding body or exam board)

Some respondents indicated that guidance is needed on how completed or partially completed NEA should contribute to the Teacher Assessed Grade.

“Due to the restrictions in schools during the pandemic it is evident that the opportunity for students to undertake the GCSE Food Preparation and Nutrition NEA2 has been severely affected. For some schools this has meant that a complete cohort were unable to complete the task and generate evidence for the Teacher Assessed Grade (TAG). Other schools have some/little evidence. Awarding organisations should provide centres with guidance/exemplars of how they can provide alternative evidence if they were unable to undertake/complete the NEA2. It is essential to ensure the students are not disadvantaged due to circumstances outside of their or their centre’s control.” (Other representative or interest group)

“It may be helpful to clarify whether NEA should carry the same or similar weight in teachers’ judgements as the additional assessment material being provided by awarding organisations.” (University or higher education institution)

“More guidance needs to be made on how NEAs are to be marked and used. Specifically, do centres advise students of NEA marks, do students get a chance to appeal the marks. Is there a deadline to this as per the original GQ timetable (circa 15th May) or is this now up to schools.” (Exams Officer or manager)

A query was raised about whether internal standardisation of NEA would be required.

“Will internal standardisation still be required for NEA, EPQ and practical endorsements? [...]” (Teacher – responding in a personal capacity)

It was suggested that moderation could take place across schools.

“Moderation which forms part of internal moderation is sensible, and schools should be encouraged to continue to work together to provide an external viewpoint on NEA where possible. This will then form part of the internal QA process to validate grades awarded.” (School or college)

An inconsistency was highlighted with the approach taken to vocational and technical qualifications.

“The inconsistency between this lack of moderation for GCSE/A Level and the BTEC still requiring SV moderation.” (SLT – Senior leadership team)

Consultation on arrangements for autumn exams

A few respondents commented on the reference to our decision to consult on an autumn exam series. Most of those that did were supportive of this series taking place and expressed views that it should be open to all students. [A separate consultation for autumn exams](#) has been launched.

Question 3a

Do you have any comments on proposed Condition GQAA3.1 in relation to eligibility?

There were 126 responses to this question. In many of these comments, respondents simply indicated that they were satisfied with these requirements. We summarise below the remaining responses – those which relate to Condition GQAA3.1 in relation to eligibility.

No one disagreed with the proposed condition.

Some respondents were concerned that this condition could leave the opportunity for some centres to ‘game the system’ leaving processes open to abuse by entering students who were in year 10 or below, or entering students late. Only one of the awarding organisations recognised by Ofqual to offer GCSE, AS and A level qualifications commented on this condition and felt that late submission should be supported with evidence to avoid possible malpractice.

“All entries post the TAG submission will require supporting evidence to validate entry, for example, enrolment / attendance details. Any entry of concern will be flagged to malpractice.” (Awarding body or exam board)

A small number of respondents specifically referred to the eligibility of entries for private candidates and how challenging it might be for them to find a centre or for centres to assess them in the timeframe of the proposed condition.

“If private candidates are allowed to register up to this date it may be impossible for centres to assess them before the deadline.” (Teacher - responding in a personal capacity)

Question 3b

Do you have any comments on proposed Condition GQAA3.2 in relation to determining results?

There were 131 responses to this question. In many of these comments, respondents noted that they had no comments to make. Some respondents commented on factors outside of the scope of this question, such as the type of evidence and the process of sampling to be used. We summarise below the remaining responses – those which relate to Condition GQAA3.2 in relation to determining results.

Of those who did comment, some agreed, though many of those who agreed stated that they need to know all the details of the requirements now and that they were concerned about the timescales.

“In general we agree with the proposal however the publication of any requirements and guidance should be done in a timely manner.” (Local authority)

“No, although I am deeply concerned by the time frames. Centres, students and parents need to know any requirements quickly.” (Academy chain)

Some, including one of the awarding organisations recognised by Ofqual to offer GCSE, AS and A level qualifications, were concerned about the uncertainty that requirements may be published ‘at any time’ and the impact this may have on those involved in the processes. The other awarding organisations either agreed with or did not comment on this condition.

“We can specify requirements at any time, and will usually publish those requirements.’ Any updates or changes to requirements MUST be published and centres informed of the publication thereof.” (SLT - Senior leadership team)

“Ofqual will be required to consult stakeholders before issuing, updating or otherwise requiring adherence to new guidance. It would be helpful if that was recognised expressly in GAA3.2, as it is elsewhere in Ofqual’s regulatory framework.” (Awarding body or exam board)

Some respondents felt it was important for this condition to ensure consistency in expectations from awarding organisations on centres. A small number of respondents commented on the need for further clarity.

“I would like to ensure that all awarding organisations are consistent across the same type of qualification.” (Exams officer or manager)

“It does not seem fair or transparent to issue a caveat that results should be issued "in accordance with any requirements we specify". This should be clarified before learners, teachers, centres, and awarding bodies embark on this process...” (Teacher - responding in a personal capacity)

Some respondents were concerned that it would be difficult to provide the evidence required as stated in the condition for private candidates or those in alternative provision.

“This is discriminatory. Most private candidates do not have a teacher and so are excluded from receiving a TAG. Many exam centres that take private candidates only exist as exam venues - they do not employ teachers - so again, we are excluded from this process.” (Parent or carer)

Two respondents felt that the use of the term ‘teacher assessed grade’ is inappropriate.

“...The language of ‘Teacher Assessed Grades’, instead of ‘Centre Assessed Grades’ or ‘School and College Assessed Grades’ misleads students and the public about the process this year, and may result in greater pressure on teachers during the process...” (Other representative or interest group)

Question 3c

Do you have any comments on the proposed Condition GQAA3.3 in relation to guidance for centres?

There were 135 responses to this question. In many of these comments, respondents simply indicated that they were satisfied with these requirements or noted that they had no comments to make. We summarise below the remaining responses – those which relate to Condition GQAA3.3 in relation to guidance for centres.

Some respondents who agreed felt that it was important to have guidance to support centres and teachers. Some respondents stressed how important it is to have clear and detailed guidance for them to follow.

“No, this is right. It must be robust, clear and detailed enough to provide clear guidance to teaching staff.” (School or college)

“Clear and timely guidance for centres is imperative and it is comforting to know that Ofqual will review the guidance.” (School or college)

Some respondents also emphasised the importance of consistency and clarity in the guidance across awarding organisations and this should be addressed centrally.

“All such guidance should be common across all awarding organisations for clarity and consistency.” (Other representative or interest group)

“As Ofqual have oversight of the guidance it would be significantly helpful if the guidance is consistent across awarding organisations and in a similar format when presenting the similar guidance. It would also be helpful if this guidance covers general processes as well to enable a smooth submission of data between centres and awarding bodies.” (Academy chain)

Many respondents stated that the guidance must be published as soon as possible to allow enough time for all processes to be carried out. Some were concerned this was already ‘late in the day’ for centres.

“It is imperative that the guidance to centres is issued as soon as possible to give staff sufficient time to make arrangements for collating, assessing and recording the evidence of students' work in order to determine a grade. There is no timeline given in the condition but the awarding organisations have a firm date by such time guidance should have been issued.” (Other representative or interest group)

“This guidance is coming ridiculously late in the day. It is already March and we're unlikely to receive it until April. Leaving us only a few academic weeks to apply it.” (SLT - Senior leadership team)

“Guidance needs to be provided, and as soon as possible. Do not underestimate the time taken to plan and execute effective assessments, when we are also focusing on the return to school of all pupils. This guidance should be published by the end of March.” (School or college)

The awarding organisations that commented agreed with the condition requiring them to provide support, although one response indicated that it would be important for Ofqual to require awarding organisations to set guidance that includes centres following their own policy and for aspects such as reasonable adjustments to be addressed.

Question 3d

Do you have any comments on the proposed Condition GQAA3.4 in relation to quality assurance?

There were 142 responses to this question. In many of these comments, respondents simply indicated that they were satisfied with the requirements or noted that they had no comments to make. Some of the other comments we received related to wider policy decisions and therefore fall out of scope for this consultation. We summarise below the remaining responses – those which relate specifically to Condition GQAA3.1 in relation to quality assurance.

Some respondents commented that more clarity about the detail of quality assurance processes was needed as soon as possible so that schools could begin planning assessments and collating evidence. Many of these responses were also concerned that processes should be as consistent as possible between exam boards to minimise teacher workload.

“The sooner we know details the better to allow us to modify and further strengthen our existing QA, which sees grade distributions checked and challenged against both 2019 and 2020 patterns on a termly basis.” (SLT – Senior leadership Team)

“I would like to know greater detail about what sort of quality assurance will take place and how this can be done given the individual and varying nature of evidence that can be collected and will therefore as a result vary between schools.” (Teacher – responding in a personal capacity)

“The quality assurance role of Awarding Organisations will be clear and more straightforward if Awarding Organisations provide clear, precise and nation-wide guidance in a timely manner. This will provide all Centres with clear expectations of how assessment material can be delivered, what other evidence is required and the stipulations around how a final judgement is gathered.” (Teacher – responding in a personal capacity)

Some respondents were concerned that results would not be issued where there were outstanding issues with quality assurance that had not been resolved by results day. This was felt to be harsh, and a few respondents were concerned that it may stop students progressing to the next stage of their education. One exam board which offers GCSE and A level qualifications asked for clarification of the

circumstance in which results would be withheld, for example in cases of malpractice.

“Two-stage QA necessary, but harsh if students are penalised for centre error in QA by not issuing a result.” (Exam officer or manager)

“A-level results that enable access to University places should be prioritised with provisional results available if needed.” (School or college)

“How is it possible that you could hold up a pupil's university place on account of a dispute that an awarding body has with a centre? Given how fast moving the situation is likely to be around Higher Education, how could this be justified?” (School or college)

“It is essential that awarding organisations have the power to withhold a result where there are outstanding issues. However, we are aware that completely resolving quality assurance issues can be time-consuming and complex. There will be considerable pressure to issue results in a timely fashion this summer and failure to do so may lead to issues of public confidence. Under the General Conditions, Condition H6.3 allows an awarding organisation, where it has discovered that it has issued an incorrect result, to correct that result where it considers it appropriate to do so. We would wish Condition GQAA3.4 (b) to be expressed in such a way that it allows awarding organisations discretion to issue results where it has balanced the risk of an adverse effect on the student(s) and on public confidence against the risk, which may be low, of issuing a result that might later need to be changed. We would like Ofqual to clarify in the guidance the circumstances under which they expect results would be withheld, for example, in a case of malpractice rather than in a case where sampling is not fully complete.” (Awarding body or exam board)

A small number of responses asked that the quality assurance process was clearly communicated more widely to parents and the general public. This was to help the public understand both that grade decisions were not being made by individual teachers, and the limitations of any external quality assurance process carried out by awarding organisations and exam boards.

“This is very helpful and again should reiterate the importance of a variety of layers being applied to these grades and that it is not just about an individual teacher.” (School or college)

“We would welcome clear communication of the two-stage quality assurance process to external audiences. There is a current trend for referring solely to teacher assessed grades. Although we agree with the policy decision to allow teachers to determine grades based on a wide variety of evidence, it is not the case that these are the final grades assigned to candidates. Some of the chaos around the summer 2020 results was caused by a lack of transparency about how grades were achieved and the communication of this to students, parents and carers, and centres. We must learn from this and be very clear about how grades are determined and ensure that the quality assurance process is widely understood before grades are issued.” (Other representative or interest group)

“It is crucial that the limitations on external quality assurance should be set out to ensure that the role of AOs this year is not mis-portrayed or otherwise misunderstood in light of the potentially dire consequences for public confidence in regulated qualifications this year. Therefore, it is important that the Requirements set under Condition GQAA3.2(a)(i) are clear in this regard, including in respect of what is required to be contained in the Centre policies and the Head of Centre declarations.” (Awarding body or exam board)

Question 3e

Do you have any comments on proposed Condition GQAA3.5 in relation to confidentiality?

There were 138 responses to this question. In many of these comments, respondents simply indicated that they were satisfied with these requirements or noted that they had no comments to make. We summarise below the remaining responses – those which relate specifically to Condition GQAA3.5 in relation to confidentiality.

Some respondents who agreed felt this condition would help to protect teachers throughout the process.

“I think it is crucial that the grades are kept confidential at all times until the end of the period.” (SLT - Senior leadership team)

“This condition is vitally important in order to prevent undue pressure from parents and students on colleagues.” (Exams officer or manager)

There was the same concern voiced by some respondents about the clarity of what information is shared and what is not permitted to be shared, irrespective of whether they agreed or disagreed with the proposed condition. Questions were raised about the difference between feedback and submitted grades and exactly what constitutes malpractice.

“There needs to be more explicit guidance on what is deemed reasonable as it would be unacceptable for teachers to fall foul of any malpractice or maladministration rules while doing what is consistent with their usual practice in the lead up to assessments...” (Other representative or interest group)

“Awarding organisations will need to be very clear about the difference between staff feeding back results of assessments to students and sharing with them which assessments will contribute to a grade on the one hand and not sharing the centre judgement of the final grade on the other.” (Other representative or interest group)

“I feel that this is actually impossible in a practical and meaningful way. It is going to place teachers in an even more impossible position.” (Teacher - responding in a personal capacity)

A small number of respondents cited the difficult position that teachers will be in with regards to parental and student pressure to know and potentially improve the grades they submit.

“I am concerned that this could lead to teachers facing a non-stop barrage from students and parents to know what grade is being awarded and how that can be improved and pressure from parents and students to offer continuous opportunities to improve or 'get it right'.” (Teacher - responding in a personal capacity)

“Teachers will be under immense pressure from students and their parents to divulge their Teacher Assessed Grades, especially with students in school which is a different position to last year. To be able to discuss the evidence but not the grades puts staff in a very difficult position, whereas being able to discuss evidence with a student and why they are receiving the grade given will mean they are less likely to appeal the decision as they will fully understand where their grades have come from.” (SLT - Senior leadership team)

A small number of respondents referred to the different approach taken in Wales, and Scotland where provisional grades will be shared before results days. These respondents said this could put teachers in difficult positions across borders and one respondent felt this could disadvantage students in England with regard to university places. These concerns were shared by two of the awarding organisations recognised by Ofqual to offer GCSE, AS and A level qualifications. The awarding organisations agreed with the need to provide more clarity to teachers and centres about requirements of confidentiality, for example, encouraging discussion about evidence being used and feedback to students while keeping grades confidential. Two awarding organisations also referred to the importance of ensuring the use of discretion in this condition. One awarding organisation referred to the potential benefits of sharing grades before results days with regard to the appeals process. One awarding organisation expressed concern about being able to monitor this condition.

“We are also concerned about the different decisions that have been taken in other jurisdictions, where the grade can be shared with the learner prior to submitting to the awarding organisation.” (Awarding body or exam board)

“...we proposed a process that involves ongoing discussion between a teacher and a student about the potential grade to be awarded. This provides transparency and prevents any sudden surprises when results are issued. In our

view, this has the potential to significantly reduce the risk of appeals and gives the student some agency in the process...” (Awarding body or exam board)

Question 4a

Do you have any comments on the proposed Condition GQAA4 in relation to the centre review?

There were 127 responses to this question. In over half of these comments, respondents indicated that they were satisfied with these requirements or noted that they had no comments to make. We summarise below the remaining responses – those which relate specifically to Condition GQAA4 in relation to the centre review.

The remaining comments covered a variety of themes. Three areas were raised particularly frequently – guidance, workload and relationships with parents.

Many comments noted that more or different guidance would be necessary for centre reviews to be carried out effectively. These ranged from the generic to the very specific, and covered both guidance for centres and guidance aimed at students and parents. In particular, several comments suggested guidance was needed on what kinds of issue might constitute an ‘error’.

“Again clear guidance on appeals to avoid confusion caused by uncertainty in 2020” (Exams officer or manager)

“It would be helpful if further guidance was included in relation to ‘unreasonable academic judgement’. This is a term used in a standard series, but the processes in place to award grades this summer are very different. We therefore suggest that this is acknowledged in the guidance so that learners are aware of the differences in a standard series, so that expectations are realistic.” (Awarding body or exam board)

"Can forms be provided for students/ parents to complete to request an appeal? These should contain information that makes it clear how grades were calculated, what the grounds for appeal are and that grades could go up or down." (Exams officer or manager)

“I think this is the weakest part of the process. Candidates need to have clear guidance about what is/ isn't grounds for appeal.” (SLT – Senior leadership team)

A similar number of comments also referred to the workload implications which the centre review process would have for staff. This was frequently linked to the timing of

the review process and the likelihood of centre staff having to work through a period which would otherwise be a holiday.

“There is the potential for a large increase in workload for teachers in having to deal with the first stage of appeals. Although not within the scope of this awarding framework, [we] would welcome further information from the Department over how this will be managed in the context of current workloads, and what support they will give to teachers in asking them to take this on.” (Other representative or interest group)

“The timing is pretty awful, considering schools and their staff will be required to manage appeals during the summer holiday. Not only have you handed over to teachers much of the work usually completed externally - by examination boards - but also you have amended results dates, meaning that from early August, teachers and senior staff will need to be on hand to make available and manage appeals processes.” (Teacher – responding in a personal capacity)

A slightly smaller, but still significant, group of comments referred to the potential pressure which parents might place on centres.

“It needs to be very clear to parents what is and is not grounds for appeal. We do not want any more 'but I need an A* to go to University' discussions.” (Academy chain)

“We are against Centres having to conduct reviews. Centres are conflicted and this is likely to cause animosity between families and Centres. This could become extremely personal, including between families and named individual teachers. Families of Y11 students are likely to have an ongoing relationship with the Centre. So will families of Y13s with younger siblings.” (School or college)

“I am very concerned that the appeals process is far too open to abuse from parents and pupils. What will happen if a parent threatens to sue the school unless a grade is changed? What sort of protocols and levels of protection can be offered to schools and the Heads of Centres in particular?” (SLT – Senior leadership team)

The remaining comments in response to this question covered a variety of issues. Some comments suggested that if properly carried out, a centre’s quality assurance processes should minimise these types of appeal. On a similar topic, a small number

of comments suggested a more robust external quality assurance, with exam boards sampling evidence from every centre.

Others noted the importance of private candidates being able to access the appeals process; the need for exams boards and Ofqual to support and trust centres; and made comparisons to the appeals process from 2020.

A very small number of comments addressed issues not related to the question, such as whether grade protection should be in place or suggestions for external quality assurance checks.

The exam boards which offer GCSE and A level qualifications made a number of observations, including:

- uncertainty about the provision for an appeal on grounds which include “any failure of quality assurance”, in that this could be seen by parents and students to include appeals on the basis of academic judgement, or potentially to include the exam boards’ external quality assurance
- a lack of clarity about what a centre should do were it to find through quality assurance that a student’s result is higher than it should be
- whether revised grades should be issued to students, or issued to the centre to pass on to the student

Question 4b

Do you have any comments on the proposed Condition GQAA4 in relation to the awarding organisation?

There were 141 responses to this question. In many of these comments, respondents indicated that they were satisfied with these requirements or noted that they had no comments to make. We summarise below the remaining responses – those which relate specifically to Condition GQAA4 in relation to the awarding organisation.

Similar to the comments in response to question 4a, a large proportion of the remaining comments related to guidance in some manner. Most frequently, respondents suggested that guidance would be necessary to make clear the grounds on which a student could submit an appeal. These comments often referred to uncertainty about what ‘unreasonable exercise of academic judgement’ might mean.

“Learners will automatically challenge a grade they are unhappy with ...Ofqual should please stipulate eligibility criteria candidates must satisfy to proceed.”
(Teacher – responding in a personal capacity)

“This is the area of greatest sensitivity since it is not clear what the phrase 'or on the basis that a result reflects an unreasonable exercise of academic judgement by the centre' means. Presumably, you will want this only to apply where there has been an error in determining grades, something where the grade does not reflect the evidence? Please could it be clarified what 'academic judgement' really means please?” (SLT – Senior leadership team)

Some comments did not refer to guidance on potential grounds for appeal, but noted that students should have a clear ‘reason’ for appealing.

“Candidates should also have to provide a valid reason for the appeal, having had the opportunity to review the evidence the school used for the grade. Where a candidate cannot provide a reason for the appeal (other than that they don't like their grade) the centre should be under no obligation to make the appeal.”
(Teacher – responding in a personal capacity)

Another issue which was raised frequently was about the nature of the evidence which should form part of judgements. Where these comments related to appeals (rather than the initial judgement by teachers), the most frequent focus was about what evidence might have to be sent to the exam boards for the appeals process.

"We need to know as soon as possible how much of a sample of pupils' work could be requested at Awarding Body Appeal stage and what other aspects you will examine." (SLT – Senior leadership team)

"How can the awarding body judge whether 'a centre's academic judgement was unreasonable' if it does not have access to all of the assessment material? I have already pointed out how it will be both unworkable and unreasonable for centres to have portfolios of assessments (as opposed to the marks achieved) potentially taken years ago, for scrutiny. The only safe basis for appeals is, as last year, on the grounds of malpractice or maladministration." (School or college)

On the same subject, three of the four exam boards which offer GCSEs and A levels also noted that for an appeal to the awarding organisation to be practicable, it was important to ensure that only evidence considered for the original judgement would be permitted as part of the review.

"It would be helpful if the conditions and/or guidance made it clear that the only evidence the awarding organisation will review as part of an appeal, is the evidence used by the centre in awarding the grade, ie that at the appeal stage new evidence which the learner considers to be better alternative evidence, is not permitted as part of the appeal." (Awarding body or exam board)

"In light of the appeals received last year, which included voluminous evidence that Learners/their parents said should be taken into account, [the exam board] submits that it is necessary that this is wholly clear from the outset in order that Learner/public expectations are appropriately managed and AOs' mission and remit are defined." (Awarding body or exam board)

A number of comments noted that it would be important for centres to know information such as what deadlines there may be for appeals and how much they might cost.

"Time period for appeals must be in place and cost must be clear in advance and reimbursed if the grade changes." (School or college)

"Clear time periods will help provide clarity on the resource that centres will need to plan for. It is [our] view that appeals should not be paid for by individual centres or candidates, but collectively from exam fees." (Other representative or interest group)

The issue of cost was also raised in terms of it limiting access to appeals for some students.

“There is no reference to who should pay the cost of the appeal. [Our] research has shown that students from lower socio-economic backgrounds are less likely to pursue appeals compared to their better off peers. Students should not be deterred from appealing their awarded grade solely due to cost.” (Other representative or interest group)

“GQAA4.7 seems to be the only place we have seen a reference to a fee for an appeal. This should be clearer and any cost should be published. Cost of appeals is one factor in inequality and disadvantage in the UK examinations system, at both centre and candidate level.” (School or college)

Many comments referred to the expected workload for both centre and exam board staff.

“Again, it should be recognised that any administration of appeals will constitute an additional burden for school staff at the only time this year when they can try to rest and refresh themselves ahead of the Autumn term.” (School or college)

“Centres may well be over-whelmed with appeals to deal with at a time when teaching colleagues are on their summer break! As teachers are determining the assessment grade then they will be needed to review an early appeal and provide their justification/evidence of the TAG, but will be on holiday and unable to do so. Timings needed looking at.” (Exams officer or manager)

“I think that this is going to be a monumental task for the exam boards and that this will be a logistical nightmare.” (SLT – Senior leadership team)

Some respondents commented to say that students should be able to appeal to the exam board directly, rather than having to go through their centre. Two reasons were given for this suggestion: minimising centre workload, and avoiding the risk that a centre could ‘block’ a student from appealing.

“Schools need protection from the burden of this process. Last year, many parents challenged grades [...] The time taken by this process was inordinate and the stress caused was significant. It would be much better if parents / students could appeal directly to the boards rather than require schools to appeal against their own Centre Assessed grades on behalf of students.” (SLT – Senior leadership team)

“The appeals process should not be centre based first and then the qualifications awarding body they should be simultaneous. Otherwise the centres are able to block any appeals” (Teacher – responding in a personal capacity)

A few comments referred to various types of dialogue between centres and awarding organisations. These comments were supportive of there being some dialogue.

“Discussion between an awarding organisation and a centre will be vital to ensure a detailed understanding on both sides prior to any change in grade.” (School or college)

“Agree with above, but prefer that the awarding body discusses with the centre appeals where the professional teacher judgement is being actively questioned by the awarding body.” (School or college)

“If an awarding organisation finds that a Learner’s result should be changed following an appeal under condition GQAA4.1(b), and it chooses not to seek the views of the Centre as to the appropriate revised result or it revises the result in a way which is not in line with the Centre’s views, the awarding organisation should be required to provide its reasons for not seeking the Centre’s view, or for revising the result in a different way, to the Centre. It should be required that the provision of such reasons should be in advance of providing the revised result.” (Other representative or interest group)

Several comments suggested that there should not be any appeals to the awarding organisation, due to a perceived lack of clarity about “academic judgement”, lack of common methods of assessment or national standardisation, and questions over how exam boards would be better placed to judge performance than centres.

“I can't see this working; how is the exam board better placed to judge achievement than the school. I think this should be removed as an option. It gives false hope to candidates. If it is to stay, the language should be changed to ensure candidates know how unlikely this is. Otherwise you will get a lot of these, and 99% will come to nothing; they will just be disagreements with the school's opinion.” (SLT – Senior leadership team)

“Appeals must not be allowed for "academic judgement" this is a meaningless term, especially as of March 2021 there are no clear grade descriptors for most grades in 1-9 GCSEs. If we knock back a particular appeal to a candidate we

would not expect to appeal to the exam board on a candidate's behalf. That is a farce.” (SLT – Senior leadership team)

The exam boards which offer GCSE and A level qualifications made extensive comments about the proposed conditions for appeals to the awarding organisation. These included:

- noting that there does not appear to be provision for appeals from a centre to the exam board, for example if a centre identifies that it made an administrative error
- concern over the use of ‘unreasonable exercise of academic judgement’, in that it may make it difficult to manage expectations from students and centres.
- concern about timelines for appeals, as “the operational requirements associated with the delivery of appeals as detailed in the GQAA framework, are of significantly greater scale and complexity than the post-results services AOs are more commonly required to offer”
- concern over providing reasons to the centre and potentially seeking the view of the centre, as both may prolong an appeal or invite a level of negotiation which is not appropriate

Question 4c

Do you have any comments on proposed Condition GQAA4 in relation to grade protection?

There were 129 responses to this question. In over half of these comments, respondents indicated that they were satisfied with these requirements or noted that they had no comments to make. We summarise below the remaining responses – those which relate specifically to Condition GQAA4 in relation to grade protection.

Of the remaining comments, the two issues mentioned most frequently by respondents were about the deterrent effect if results could fall on appeal as well as rise, and whether the outcome of a student's appeal should affect the results of other students who did not appeal. The presence of a deterrent effect was viewed positively, whereas the potential for one student's appeal to affect other students was opposed.

“It is critical that the result of an awarding organisation appeal could result in grades going down. This will be a deterrent to candidates requesting an appeal 'on the off chance'. If this is not the case, boards would be inundated with speculative appeals and this will put a huge strain on schools.” (SLT – Senior leadership team)

“We are supportive of both aspects. We agree that the appellant should not be in a risk-free position, as this should limit speculative appeals; and we agree that other candidates' interests should not be imperilled by the actions of appellants.” (School or college)

“This condition still potentially means that one student who appeals could negatively impact other students and does not seem fair.” (Teacher – responding in a personal capacity)

One respondent asked about the effect of the policy on collaborative work.

“Clarity is needed on how this might affect learners in subjects where there is a collaborative component i.e. GCSE and A Level Drama where individuals are assessed on their contribution to a group performance. If the same piece of work - i.e. the performance - has been reviewed and an error in marking identified in the light of an individual pupil's appeal, what will be the impact on the other learners using the same piece of work as evidence (even where they have not appealed)?” (Teacher - responding in a personal capacity)

Several respondents noted the importance for robust internal quality assurance and linked this to whether other students could be affected by an appeal.

“I would support this as it will prevent speculative appeals. It does underline the need for robust QA, however, as if schools grade a cohort high and only the pupil who appeals is reduced this would be unfair.” (SLT – Senior leadership team)

Some respondents made comments relating to areas where they would like to see clarification or guidance, most notably on how to communicate with students and parents about grade protection.

“We will want appropriate wording that we can use when we provide grades to students so they are aware of the risks.” (School or college)

Some respondents commented to say that grades should be protected so that they cannot go down if a student appeals. Most comments making this point did not provide a clear reason other than suggesting it would be ‘unfair’ were a grade to be lowered.

“Again, it feels like you are threatening to punish pupils for errors at the centre level.” (School or college)

“Student grades should not be moved down under any circumstances, this would be unfair on them and the school.” (Teacher – responding in a personal capacity)

The exam boards which offer GCSE and A level qualifications made a number of points, including:

- there might be times when it is desirable to lower a grade of someone who did not appeal, the most obvious being where the grades of two candidates have been transposed in error
- the conditions are silent on the role of the Examination Procedures Review Service (EPRS)
- the conditions are currently unclear about whether a grade could be lowered at the centre review stage, as well as at the awarding organisation appeal stage

Question 4d

Do you have any comments on proposed Condition GQAA4 in relation to guidance?

There were 129 responses to this question. In over two-thirds of these comments, respondents indicated that guidance would be appreciated or noted that they had no comments to make. We summarise below the remaining responses – those which relate specifically to Condition GQAA4 in relation to guidance.

Most of the remaining comments focused on the necessity of guidance being clear and timely. While many of the requests for clarity were not specific, others highlighted certain aspects of the process where it was felt that clear guidance was particularly necessary, including:

- the fact that grades can go down as well as up
- students will need clear forms to fill in if they wish to appeal
- fees should be published from the start
- timeliness is important as centres will already be gathering evidence

Some also mentioned specific subjects or types of student.

“The protocols and guidance need to be very clear and it must be highlighted that marks can go down as well as up.” (SLT – Senior leadership team)

“Please ensure a form is provided for candidates to use if they wish to appeal - that is clear and spells out all options and ramifications.” (Exams officer or manager)

“Clear guidance needs to be published as soon as possible. A flowchart which runs into the autumn term and concludes the exam process with details and timescales for schools would be useful.” (Local authority)

“Only that any fees must be published from the start.” (School or college)

“Only that this guidance must be prompt. It pertains to information that centres may currently be gathering (4.11(c)) and should be expedited as part of the next phase of information to centres.” (SLT – Senior leadership team)

“Section GQAA4.11(c) states that guidance will be provided on the evidence that will be considered by the awarding organisation in an appeal. In the case of home educated young people, it needs to be clear whether this may include evidence available to but not selected by the exam centre (for instance work that the candidate has supplied showing a high academic standard that the exam centre decides not to accept for some reason, which may be the basis for the appeal).” (Student - private, home-educated of any age)

“A [...] report (2014) highlighted that social class and school attended is associated with the level of information, advice and guidance a young person receives. This disproportionate lack of access to information, advice and guidance for students from disadvantaged backgrounds means that it is imperative that messaging is clear and uniform.” (Other representative or interest group)

A number of comments also noted that it was important that guidance was consistent between the different exam boards.

“Again, the same guidance should be issued for each subject offered by more than one awarding organisation.” (School or college)

“We agree with the guidance requirements, and will seek to align, through cross-AO working groups such as JCQ, as far as is possible in our approach to centre facing guidance relating to appeals.” (Awarding body or exam board)

Only one of the exam boards which offers GCSEs and A levels commented.

“It would be helpful to have narrative guidance from Ofqual describing how the regime will work, what the scope of review/appeal is intended to be and under what circumstances grades will be changed, if not made wholly clear in the GQAA Conditions by reference to [our] comments above.” (Awarding body or exam board)

Question 5a

Do you have any comments on the proposed Condition GQAA3.2(a)(i) requirements in relation to Teacher Assessed Grades?

There were 149 responses to this question. In many of these comments, respondents simply indicated that they were satisfied with these requirements or noted that they had no comments to make. Some of the other comments we received related to wider policy decisions and therefore fall out of scope for this consultation. We summarise below the remaining responses – those which relate specifically to Condition GQAA3.2(a)(i) in relation to Teacher Assessed Grades.

Some respondents made comments agreeing with the proposals in relation Teacher Assessed Grades.

Respondents made comments about the following issues in relation to Teacher Assessed Grades:

- the need for clarity, training and guidance
- they should not be labelled as Teacher Assessed Grades to avoid the focus being on teachers when a wide range of people will be involved in their generation
- the evidence that would be needed to support the grading judgement
- concerns over the consistency of Teacher Assessed Grades

“Clarity required re: NEA and discussing grades awarded for assessments with students in advance.” (Exams officer or manager)

“Guidance for the 'how' needs to be very clear.” (SLT - Senior leadership team)

“Please ensure teachers use assessments taken already and that have been ongoing so far. Do not allow exams and tests now that many colleges and schools are planning this rather than teaching them now.” (Parent or carer)

“The biggest problem I can see with all of this is the consistency of judgement of what grade a student's work is judged at, in the absence of a standardised set of grade boundaries from year to year for examined work. One centre's judgement of what constitutes grade B work may be seen as grade C work in another centre.” (Teacher – responding in a personal capacity)

Some respondents raised concerns about Private Candidates in relation to Teacher Assessed Grades in answer to this question; any relevant concerns have been considered elsewhere in this document.

Question 5b

Do you have any comments on the proposed Condition GQAA3.2(a)(i) requirements in relation to additional assessment materials?

There were 164 responses to this question. In many of these comments, respondents simply indicated that they were satisfied with these requirements or noted that they had no comments to make. Some of the other comments we received related to wider policy decisions and therefore fall out of scope for this consultation. We summarise below the remaining responses – those which relate specifically to Condition GQAA3.2(a)(i) in relation to additional assessment materials.

Many respondents welcomed the provision of additional assessment materials but expressed concern that the timeline was very short and that they need to be available to teachers as soon as possible.

“Agree. It would be useful to know as soon as possible when these materials will be available.” (SLT - Senior leadership team)

“This must be soon - I cannot overstate this enough.” (School or college)

“We welcome the publication of additional assessment materials, and the decision to make these optional. Ofqual should require all additional assessment materials for all general qualifications to be published to centres no later than Wednesday 31 March.” (Other representative or interest group)

Some respondents commented that they need more clarity about how the additional assessment materials should be used including the level of demand of the materials and provision for students with SEND.

“Greater clarity is essential as to how these additional assessment materials can and should be used to ensure parity across all centres.” (Teacher – responding in a personal capacity)

“Can there be clarification on the likely grades or difficulties of the questions / materials?” (School or college)

“In order that pupils with protected characteristics or medical conditions are not disadvantaged in this process there should be no minimum requirement set for what is considered in the teacher assessment. It should also be further specified by exam boards any reasonable adjustments that can be made to these assessment materials to make them accessible to pupils with SEND e.g. modified language papers, large print papers.” (Other representative or interest group)

Some respondents expressed concern that the use of additional assessment materials would place significant workload demands on teachers and centres.

“The assessment of these additional materials does have the potential to impose significant additional workload on teachers compared to a normal year when the assessment would be the responsibility of the exam boards.” (Exams officer or manager)

The exam boards which offer GCSE and A level qualifications expressed the views that the additional assessment materials should only be available on the exam boards’ secure websites and that attainment data and information about grade boundaries should not be provided as part of the support materials. They noted that grade boundaries are set on whole past papers which students are not expected to take this year. They also expressed concerns about the possible unintended consequences of giving students direct access to the materials. For example, attempting to memorise the assessments and responses in advance of them being used by the teacher resulting in assessments reflecting memorisation as opposed to subject knowledge and understanding.

Some respondents raised concerns about additional assessment materials being available to Private Candidates and those that are home-educated.

“I think there needs to be clarity about the availability of these for private candidates; we feel they will be useful although all candidates (internal and private) will need the same guidance as to what subject topics will be tested in formal tests.” (Other representative or interest group)

Question 5c

Do you have any comments on proposed the proposed Condition GQAA3.2(a)(i) requirements in relation to internal quality assurance?

There were 128 responses to this question. In many of these comments, respondents simply indicated that they were satisfied with these requirements or noted that they had no comments to make. Some of the other comments we received related to wider policy decisions and therefore fall out of scope for this consultation. We summarise below the remaining responses – those which relate specifically to Condition GQAA3.2(a)(i) in relation to internal quality assurance.

Many responses emphasised the need for the detailed requirements of the internal quality assurance process to be finalised as soon as possible, so that schools have time to develop their individual internal quality assurance process, carry out further assessments and compile additional evidence if required.

“Guidance should be provided promptly so that centres can plan assessments with appropriate mechanisms for marking, standardisation etc.” (School or college)

There were also many respondents who felt that the proposals were acceptable, but were concerned that the requirements for schools’ internal quality assurance processes should, as far as possible, be consistent across exam boards.

“Agreed but these should be consistent between awarding organisations not separate for each one.” (Academy chain)

“This needs to be the same process as far as possible as if not it will be difficult to both implement and manage, it will also be difficult for students and parents to understand in terms of fairness and consistency.” (School or college)

A small number of respondents were concerned that the guidance put in place by exam boards must be flexible enough to allow evidence appropriate to different subject types.

“The guidance about having a set policy on the approach to each Teacher Assessed Grade needs to allow for a centre having different approaches for subjects with different characteristics e.g. those with practical skills, those with distinct topics e.g. history, and those that are cumulative with no distinct content areas on the papers e.g. maths.” (Teacher – responding in a personal capacity)

A significant number of responses talked about the use of prior data, in particular the use of historical data described in section (c) of the proposal, and if outcomes from 2020 assessments should be considered as part of this.

“Concern raised by the requirement that “centres should consider the grades for this year’s cohort compared to cohorts from previous years when exams have taken place” Does this include the 2020 Centre Assessed Grade cohort? They did not have exams and therefore by this wording, the 2020 results are not comparable. How do we evidence that our internal QA process has done a comparison to historical results for the centre? What about the reformed specifications which only have one year of exam results to compare to, e.g. Politics A level has had only one cohort successfully complete examinations.” (School or college)

“There remains an, as yet unresolved, issue in relation to how Centres could or should use the Summer 2020 results data for comparison purposes. It appears that the reference to “internal quality assessment” in the penultimate paragraph of page 15 was intended to refer to internal quality assurance.” (Awarding body or exam board)

“There is no clear stipulation as to whether 2020 results should be taken into account when looking at historical data.... Many of our stakeholders report that there is an expectation that the ‘standard’ for this summer should somehow align with that of summer 2020, a year when we saw significant increases in the awarding of higher grades.

A small number of respondents raised concerns as to how private candidates would fit into a school’s internal QA process.

“It is essential guidance is provided for private candidates in addition to centres own candidates. It needs to be clear and take account of private candidates unique circumstances, and not incur the centre further cost and work that may then preclude them accepting private candidates at all.” (Student – private, home-educated of any age)

“Where centres deal with a mix of internal and private candidates moderating is difficult. The evidence put forward from DLPs and tutors last year was variable. A clear, strategy of core, minimum evidence for assessment and emphasis on centres verifying students work - ideally through controlled assessment, will make

it easier for centres to have clear guidelines to work in.” (Teacher – responding in a personal capacity)

Some respondents identified a potential typographical error in the draft conditions document.

“Possible error in the second paragraph, the one before the bullets. ‘assessment’ may have been intended to be ‘assurance’”. (Other representative or interest group)

Question 5d

Do you have any comments on proposed the proposed Condition GQAA3.2(a)(i) requirements in relation to external quality assurance?

There were 130 responses to this question. In many of these comments, respondents were concerned that the details of the external quality assurance process were provided to schools as soon as possible. This included clarity as to the timelines for the external quality assurance process, and sometimes concerns that the timelines may be too short for quality assurance to be carried out fully.

“What is this going to look like. We need to know. Could schools submit this beforehand, have it signed off by exam boards and then released to parents and students. Do we need to do it for all exam boards or could they all agree and each school submit to one board. If it is to all board separately, please can it be the same document that you have to send to all otherwise we are just creating work for ourselves. (SLT - Senior leadership team)

“If results are submitted from schools on 18 June and students are expecting results early August, does that give awarding organisations enough time to apply the necessary rigour to their quality assurance?” (Teacher - responding in a personal capacity)

“External QA needs to be in a timely manner - called for BEFORE the end of the academic year “(School or college)

Also in relation to the timeline for the external quality assurance, one response from an exam board which offers GCSE and A level qualifications recommended that this should only take place once centres had submitted teacher assessed grades.

“However, we strongly disagree that awarding organisations should undertake quality assurance of Teacher Assessed Grades before those grades are submitted to the awarding organisation. Awarding organisations will only be able to identify implausibly high or low grades based on a full submission of results by centres. The teachers assessed grade deadline is proposed as 18th June, and we strongly recommend that such external quality assurance can only take place after this deadline” (Awarding body or exam board)

Many respondents were concerned about the nature of the evidence that an exam board may request, where more detailed checks were carried out. These included concerns about collating large amounts of work retrospectively, both in relation to the

workload involved, and the practicality of providing work which schools may have returned to students, not realising that it may be needed again.

“The proposals refer to the awarding organisations needing to 'review evidence' in some circumstances. I would like further clarification on this - does this refer to reviewing the data (i.e. the grades/marks that were used to determine the final awarded grade) or do you mean the actual physical evidence (i.e. the physical mock exam itself, and the marks awarded to different questions)? I think it will not be feasible for teachers to gather physical evidence retrospectively i.e. ask students to provide/submit previous mock examinations that we don't currently have a copy of, so I think from a practical perspective this would be extremely difficult.” (Teacher – responding in a personal capacity)

“Reviewing some of the evidence relied on by the centre' is a distinctly moveable feast. There needs to be much more detail on what that means. As above, if it involves transferring vast swathes of student work, that is highly problematic.” (SLT - Senior leadership team)

There were some responses regarding how awarding organisations should target their more in-depth quality assurance. This included concerns that centres whose results were not in line with previous years for valid reasons may be unnecessarily targeted and that they should be given an opportunity to justify this in their submissions to the exam board.

“An absolutely critical external QA is of grade entries against historical results. Centres must be made aware in very clear terms that any deviation of grades above the already generous 2020 levels will invite substantial, sustained and relentless examination of evidence, systems and processes by exam boards such that school staff are aware of the costs, in terms of their own time and stress (across their holidays) of any such behaviour. Operating in this full knowledge, they can push back effectively against demands by pupils, parents and others for unrealistic and undeserved grades.” (School or college)

“This should be targeted to take account of risk. For example centres entering larger numbers of underage candidates, significant differences in tiers and grades to previous years etc. An early assessment of those centres which in 2020 submitted grades significantly different from their historic distribution would be worthwhile. This could give awarding bodies an early opportunity to support centres which might struggle with identifying grades.” (School or college)

“It is our understanding that some external quality assurances, including random and risk-based sampling, would need to take place after results are submitted, not before, as suggested in this proposal. It is our view that the set criteria in (b)(ii) should not be defined numerically by Ofqual or the awarding organisations. This may result in unintended behaviours. Instead, awarding organisations should use an intelligent approach to risk assessment; for example, concentrating on centres that have the most unusual data first. We recognise that smaller centres have statistically greater variance in results, so some small centres must also be selected for random sampling.” (Other representative or interest group)

“Where a centre's results for a subject are not in line with previous cohorts for valid reasons e.g. change in entry pattern, increase in teaching time, different makeup of cohort, the centre should be required to provide a statement about this as part of their quality assurance; centres could be required to proactively send this to awarding bodies showing they have considered the reasons for this.” (Teacher – responding in a personal capacity).

One response from an exam board which offers GCSE and A level qualifications raised concerns about potential unintended consequences arising from the requirement to carry out further checks on schools where there had been complaints from whistle-blowers.

“We are concerned by the requirement for AOs to undertake “more detailed checks” in the case of certain centres, particularly those “in relation to which the awarding organisation has received relevant complaints or information from whistle-blowers”. Could these complainants include pupils? If so, would this not be introducing a process for challenging provisional results?” (Awarding body or exam board)

There were a small number of responses suggesting changes to the wording of the conditions, usually for reasons of clarity.

“In the draft framework (p16) the word BEFORE in “undertake quality assurance of Teacher Assessed Grades before those grades are submitted to the awarding organisation.” Seems peculiar and unclear.” (School or college)

“It is our understanding that some external quality assurances, including random and risk-based sampling, would need to take place after results are submitted, not before, as suggested in this proposal. It is our view that the set criteria in (b)(ii) should not be defined numerically by Ofqual or the awarding organisations. This may result in unintended behaviours. Instead, awarding organisations should

use an intelligent approach to risk assessment; for example, concentrating on centres that have the most unusual data first. We recognise that smaller centres have statistically greater variance in results, so some small centres must also be selected for random sampling.” (Other representative or interest group)

“Detailed checks are likely to include sampling, at GQ Qualification level, of the evidence on which Centre Grades are based, but it may not be appropriate to do so in every case and so it is suggested that “must” in relation to these actions would most appropriately be amended to “may”.

Question 6a

Do you have any comments on the proposed document: 'Information for heads of centre, heads of department and teachers on the submission of teacher assessed grades: summer 2021', in relation to standards in 2021?

There were 141 responses to this question. Some of the respondents noted they had no comments to make, while others commented on wider policy decisions and therefore fall out of scope for this consultation. We summarise below the remaining responses – those which relate specifically to the guidance on standards in 2021.

Some respondents agreed with the information about standards in 2021 in the proposed document.

"The proposals are entirely fair and reasonable. It will be challenging to maintain consistency with grades awarded in previous years but centres should make every effort to do so." (Academy chain)

"Needs the fine details completing via the exam boards, but otherwise this seems good." (Exams officer or manager)

Standards

Some respondents suggested that more clarity was needed about the standard at which students should be assessed. They were uncertain how to understand the guidance that it should be no easier or harder for a student to achieve a particular grade this year, despite potentially not having been taught all of the content.

"...We would also note the challenge that arises in the following statements, that it should be "...no easier or harder for a student to achieve a particular grade this year compared to previous years", and the statement that "...students in 2021 might not have been taught all the content and so might not demonstrate such a broad range of knowledge, skills and understanding." We believe that whilst we understand the principle in play here, the actual specifics and challenges we may receive from centres on this point, where it reads across to VTQ, will be difficult to accurately and reliably respond to and tangibly explain to centres how they do this." (Awarding body or exam board)

“The fourth paragraph does not make sense in practice and should be removed as it could lead to further confusion rather than clarity.” (Other representative or interest group)

“It is essential that teachers be told whether to judge students by the very generous standards of 2020, or the more rigorous and realistic standards of previous years. It will be very unfair, if some teachers use one standard, and others another.” (Teacher – responding in a personal capacity)

“There currently seems to be conflicting advice as to whether 2021 standards should be comparable to those of 2020 or of 2019. This needs to be clarified.” (Other)

Some respondents indicated that more guidance was needed to help teachers understand the standard and be in a position to apply this consistently.

“We welcome the fact that students will be assessed against a national standard of performance. In normal years, the standard is set through a range of qualitative and statistical processes. Because no statistical processes will be used this year, it is important that the standard for each grade in each qualification is clearly defined. For this reason, we would suggest the materials provided by the exam boards don’t merely ‘exemplify’ the standard (p4), but ‘define’ it. We think this could be more clearly expressed in this document. The decision not to specify minimum content is understandable, and one we agree with. However, there should be guidance given on the suggested coverage of assessment objectives, to ensure that grades this year are meaningful.” (Other representative or interest group)

“The information and guidance from the exam boards is crucial here in order to have parity between centres, so detailed guidance with mark schemes, level descriptors and grade boundaries is important.” (SLT – Senior leadership team)

“The biggest problem I can see with all of this is the consistency of judgement of what grade a student’s work is judged at, in the absence of a standardised set of grade boundaries from year to year for examined work. (Teacher – responding in a personal capacity)

Data and grades

Many of the comments related to the guidance that centres should, as part of their overall quality assurance, consider the grades for this year's cohort compared to cohorts from previous years when exams have taken place. Respondents asked for greater clarity on:

- which previous years should be considered
- how comparisons should be made given the different circumstances this year
- how much regard should be given to these comparisons

"We would caution against putting too much emphasis on the comparison with previous cohorts. Previous cohorts have not been educated through a pandemic, and the 2020 cohort that did experience disruption toward the end of their courses have results that look very different to other years. We also need to allow for improvements at local and/or an individual level. Appropriately recognising student achievement should be the priority here rather than comparing with other years." (Other representative or interest group)

"The guidance suggests that centres should consider the grades for this year's cohort compared to cohorts from previous years when exams have taken place. Given that the 2020 cohort received far higher grades in comparison to a normal year, [we are] concerned that only anchoring grades to years when exams have taken place may disadvantage this year's cohort comparison with the 2020 cohort, with whom they will be competing for university places, job roles and other opportunities. It is important that the 2021 cohort are not prevented from accessing future opportunities as a result of this year's grading arrangements." (Other representative or interest group)

"...Our experience of dealing with complaints relating to the summer 2020 centre assessment grade (CAG) process leads us to believe that the wording regarding the use of data in validating centres' judgements regarding TAGs may lead to centres adopting different approaches, with some centres rigidly forcing their TAGs to adhere to a previous cohort's grade profile and other centres undertaking very little moderation. We feel that the wording in this area needs to be clearer..." (Awarding body or exam board)

A few respondents were concerned they would not be able to make like-for-like comparisons with previous cohorts because of changes in Key Stage 2 National Assessments.

“This is the first year group to have sat the different SATs assessments, is there any benchmarking to compare prior attainment, thus ensuring that students’ progress performance is comparable?” (School or college)

Question 6b

Do you have any comments on the proposed document: ‘Information for heads of centre, heads of department and teachers on the submission of teacher assessed grades: summer 2021’, in relation to sources of evidence (other than in relation to private candidates)?

There were 127 responses to this question. In many of these comments, respondents simply indicated that they were satisfied with these requirements or noted that they had no comments to make. Some of the other comments we received related to wider policy decisions and therefore fall out of scope for this consultation. We summarise below the remaining responses – those which relate specifically to the guidance on sources of evidence.

Some respondents agreed with the proposed document relating to sources of evidence.

“The sources of evidence are fair and reasonable. The evidence collected must be sufficiently robust to support teachers' judgements and the proposals should help to ensure this.” (Academy chain)

Some respondents commented that more clarity was needed about the sources of evidence, particularly in relation to using the evidence to come to a judgement about a grade, the training needed for teachers and how to take account of the various students' experiences caused by the pandemic.

“We think more guidance may be needed in this document, or in the materials provided by awarding organisations, on how teachers and leaders should professionally judge the reliability and validity of different forms of evidence.” (Other representative or interest group)

“This is clear but obviously needs backing up with training.” (School or college)

“We welcome that teachers are advised to consider coursework even if not complete and that centres need to be flexible where students may have missed particular assessments.” (Other representative or interest group)

Respondents to this question raised broad issues relating to the sources of evidence including:

- how much evidence is required
- clearer parameters for the evidence
- the sharing of the evidence base with students
- the use of evidence from outside the course in coming to a grading judgement

“There is still no clarity on how much evidence is required.” (SLT - Senior leadership team)

“We need clarity on what counts as a piece of evidence – is an essay enough or would it need to be a past paper? If so, how much of a past paper? Does the evidence need to cover all of the Assessment Objectives?” (School or college)

“We consider it important that centres share with candidates details of the centre’s TAG process, the evidence which will form the basis for their TAGs, and the marks/grades of this evidence.” (Awarding body or exam board)

“In P.E. candidates may have evidence, including video and testimonials, from outside of the course which may not directly apply to the NEA but is nonetheless relevant to the qualification. Assuming that this evidence can be authenticated and is applicable, then we consider that it would be of significant value in balancing the evidence available and coming to an holistic judgement on a TAG given that there are challenges completing NEA in these qualifications due to Covid restrictions.” (Awarding body or exam board)

Many respondents expressed concern about whether physical evidence would be needed for it to be considered, citing examples such as mock examinations that had been returned to students.

“There are certain types of evidence which fit the criteria set out in the document but may no longer exist or be in a centre’s possession. One example of this is a mock exam or paper containing exam-like questions/tasks sat earlier in the course. In many instances, such papers/tasks are returned to students to allow them to retain the feedback and use it for revision.” (Other representative or interest group)

“My concern is that of evidence. For NEAs it is fine, but for assessments, we're unlikely to have any marked evidence because scripts have been returned to students along the way.” (Teacher – responding in a personal capacity)

“Are actual pieces of work to be retained to support marks? Is it recommended that these are scanned now, pending possibility of an appeal or just the actual mark record kept?” (Exams officers or manager)

Some respondents pointed out that more clarity was needed now as the timescale for assessment and coming to a grading judgement was very short.

“I agree but the timescale is very tight.” (School or college)

Some respondents raised concerns about Private Candidates in relation to sources of evidence in answer to this question and any relevant concerns have been considered in the analysis for Question 6c.

Question 6c

Do you have any comments on the proposed document: 'Information for heads of centre, heads of department and teachers on the submission of teacher assessed grades: summer 2021', in relation to sources of evidence (private candidates)?

There were 127 responses to this question. In many of these comments, respondents simply indicated that they were satisfied with these requirements or noted that they had no comments to make. Some of the other comments we received related to wider policy decisions and therefore fall out of scope for this consultation. We summarise below the remaining responses – those which relate specifically to the guidance on sources of evidence for private candidates.

Some respondents agreed with the information about sources of evidence for private candidates in the proposed document.

“This seems fair, particularly the ability to accept evidence produced by other educational organisations as otherwise the assessment of private candidates could place a large burden on the staff at the entering centre and make them reluctant to accept private candidates meaning that they students would suffer.”
(Exams officer or manager)

“Clear and reasonable.” (Teacher – responding in a personal capacity)

“We agree that private candidates should be assessed on a range of evidence, similar to other students, and that centres should be able to take maximum advantage of the available flexibility in order to ensure they are able to determine an appropriate grade for private candidates.” (Awarding body or exam board)

A few suggested that the guidance should provide more information to help centres understand whether they should accept private candidates, particularly those studying less common subjects such as astronomy or community languages.

“It would be helpful to have explicitly outlined that only centres with a relevant subject specialist can accept private candidates in that subject. For example, we have German and Italian private candidates but no subject specialist on site. We have assumed that as we cannot authenticate the evidence, these private candidates must secure another centre with the relevant expertise. Moreover, it would be useful to have a list of centres with more unusual subject specialism to be able to share with the candidates.” (School or college)

Some respondents said that more guidance was needed about the amount of evidence that centres would need for private candidates, as well as on the role of tutors in gathering that evidence.

“It would be helpful to have further, more detailed guidance on private candidates and evidence. Also, there will be candidates who might be regarded as 'private' but have an established and long-standing relationship with a centre, e.g. those who were in Year 13 in 2020, were awarded results based on the Centre Assessment Grade model, who wished to take examination papers in summer 2021 at the same centre at which they were taught for their courses. Some guidance on the extent to which a holistic judgement can be made as would be made for e.g. current Year 13 candidates, i.e. on the basis of performance throughout their courses from 2018-2020, would be helpful.” (SLT – Senior leadership team)

“It should be noted that many private candidates with accredited tutors or DLPs will have been regularly assessed on their performance throughout their course of study by their tutor/DLP, and this too must be considered admissible evidence and sound judgement of their student's performance.” (Teacher – responding in a personal capacity)

“I am deeply concerned at the prospect of being presented with private tutor evidence. I hope it is clear in the anticipated guidance that this evidence should be considered to be of low confidence, as was the case last year.” (SLT – Senior leadership team)

“...Without a guideline, some centres feel they need to charge for tutors to work with home educated students for long periods of time in order to gather sufficient verified evidence, or for candidates to produce large amounts of work that they may not yet have available in a suitable form (e.g. 10 marked assignments across the course). If in fact a smaller number of timed assessments would be acceptable, it would be enormously helpful to have this stated explicitly. Centres also need clear guidance on what is the minimum sufficient evidence they need to collect and store against the possibility of appeals, and for how long they need to store this.” (Other representative or interest group)

A few respondents commented on the importance of exam boards providing timely additional guidance to help centres determine grades for private candidates.

“Centres and students need URGENT information as many centres are refusing to accept external students on the basis that they have no idea how to provide a grading. Many are wary of marking such assessments for private candidates without proper guidance and instruction from the awarding organisations. This is placing an enormous strain on all private candidates and reducing their opportunities to either achieve their results and/or progress in their education.”
(Student – private, home-educated of any age)

Question 6d

Do you have any comments on the proposed document: 'Information for heads of centre, heads of department and teachers on the submission of teacher assessed grades: summer 2021', in relation to internal sign-off within the centre?

There were 121 responses to this question. In many of these comments, respondents simply indicated that they were satisfied with these requirements or noted that they had no comments to make. Some of the other comments we received related to wider policy decisions and therefore fall out of scope for this consultation. We summarise below the remaining responses – those which relate specifically to guidance on internal sign-off with the centre.

A small number of respondents were concerned about the arrangements for sign-off of results where there was only a single subject specialist in the school or even, in the case of private candidates, where there was no subject specialist available at all.

“Heads of centre may not have the specialist knowledge to sign off on grades in subjects where there is only one specialist teacher.” (Other representative or interest group)

“Each grade for a subject must be signed off by at least 2 teachers in that subject, one of whom should be the head of department or subject lead. Where there is only one teacher in the subject or department, or only one is available, the head of centre should be the second signatory.” It may be the case that there are *no* teachers of a subject at a centre, for some Private Candidates (particularly home educated candidates, but also including heritage language or extra-curricular subjects for pupils normally attending a school). A process needs to be determined for grades to be signed off in this instance.” (Other representative or interest group)

“For some subjects the exam centre may not have an internal assessor available (home educated pupils do have more choices over GCSE subjects and study subjects not available with a school but can include heritage languages). Therefore a process does need to be easily implemented and stated for exam centres in these cases.” (Student – private, home-educated of any age)

Some respondents were pleased that the consideration of reasonable adjustments for disabled students had been included in the centre declaration, but sought some clarifications on this. This included making it clear that specialist teachers (e.g. specialist teachers of the deaf) had been consulted if appropriate. There were also requests for guidance as to how centres should deal with cases where special consideration would usually be applied for and where the exam board would usually make a decision as to how this would be quantified. There were also responses regarding access arrangements for private candidates, and how to ensure that these candidates are not disadvantaged.

“The Head of Centre's declaration should state that appropriate access arrangements had been applied where relevant and that specialist teachers had been involved in the process eg deciding what evidence is appropriate or entering into grade-setting discussions” (Other representative or interest group)

“Our main comment on this document is to warmly welcome the necessity for Heads of Centre to sign off that access arrangements had been in place when assessments were taking place on which judgements were being formed. It should be clear that where a deaf candidate is involved the advice should be provided by the specialist Teacher of the Deaf not necessarily the SENCo. We would also ask that a further statement is added to say that where relevant specialist teachers who had been involved with the student over their educational career should also be consulted in relation to deciding which evidence to use etc and in some cases in discussions re the awarding of grades.” (Other representative or interest group)

“The 'access arrangements and reasonable adjustments were provided with appropriate input from the SENCo and other specialists' is going to be a challenge for pupils who may have struggled with mental health more during the pandemic. It is hard to quantify and usually something for which special consideration is requested and decisions made by exam boards and not centres. Already some pupils and parents have enquired as to how this will be mitigated.” (SLT – Senior leadership team)

“As stated above, explicit guidance needs to be offered on the handling of access arrangements for home educated private candidates who have had to register with a centre at a late stage due to the change in arrangements. These students will not have had the normal way of working assessments completed but still

need access arrangements for any assessments undertaken to ensure they are not at a disadvantage due to their disabilities.” (Other representative or interest group)

One response suggested a slight change of wording, for clarity and consistency with other documents.

“The penultimate bullet on the head of centre declaration would be better if the word ‘objectivity’ was included, so as to ensure it covers all aspects of this issue and is consistent with wording used in other documentation. The following is suggested: “I and my staff have taken note of the guidance from exam boards about objectivity and potential biases, and I am confident that the judgements are fair” (Other representative or interest group)

Question 7a

Do you have any comments on the proposed document: ‘Information for centres about making objective judgements’, in relation to objectivity in grading judgements?

There were 121 responses to this question. In many of these comments, respondents simply indicated that they were satisfied with these requirements or noted that they had no comments to make. Some of the other comments we received related to wider policy decisions and therefore fall out of scope for this consultation. We summarise below the remaining responses – those which relate specifically to the ‘Objectivity in grading judgements’ section of our proposed document.

A number of respondents made specific suggestions for additions or amendments to this section of the document.

“We suggest a change to the wording in sentence 1: “balancing a range of evidence and data”. The current wording “different sources” may be misleading and could be inferred as including different types of evidence when in fact centres could base their decisions on relatively few pieces of evidence of the same evidence type, e.g. responses to groups of questions.” (Awarding body or exam board)

“Given the Equality Impact Assessment Literature Review Ofqual published last year did indicate there are concerns that EAL [English as an Additional Language] pupils may be underrated in teacher assessments, and that objectivity in teacher assessment for pupils who speak EAL does require the teacher to not misuse the student’s proficiency in English as an indicator of subject content knowledge [we] would recommend including the following into the guidance: “Other factors should not affect this judgement, including characteristics protected under equalities legislation such as a student’s sex, race, religion/belief, disability status, gender reassignment or sexual orientation. For students who speak English as an Additional Language (EAL) judgements should not be made about content understanding based on perceived English language proficiency.”” (Other representative or interest group)

“Centres should also be warned against allowing knowledge of students’ conditional offers for university, college or apprenticeship places to undermine the objectivity of grading.” (Other representative or interest group)

“Social background” is a little odd in paragraph 3 – could be rephrased to “appearance, social background, or the performance...”. It is the inclusion of “or” in “appearance or social background” that puts a strange nuance on this. Alternatively omit “social background” here and insert into the section below.”
(Awarding body or exam board)

A number of respondents suggested that centres would need further detail in order to be able to make objective judgements in practice.

“Too vague to be helpful. Will not help teachers see their biases.” (Teacher - responding in a personal capacity)

“It's all a bit woolly...” (Exams officer or manager)

There were suggestions that the proposed document could include particular detail in relation to private candidates.

“All the comments about objectivity apply to home educated candidates. However these are also enhanced by a lack of prior knowledge of performance, and a potential lack of understanding of the home educated candidate’s learning process which may differ considerably from the process of a typical school student. Guidance needs to include the fact that home educated candidates often learn in different contexts and formats and may not have a pre-existing range of evidence in the format a schooled student might.” (Other representative or interest group)

Some respondents made comments relating to the document as a whole.

“Given the principle that Category B qualifications should align with arrangements for GQs [general qualifications] as far as possible, we think the advice should be largely generic and apply to both types of qualifications. Where differences are identified these could be made explicit. [We] would recommend redrafting this advice so that a single set of advice applies to both types of qualifications.”
(Awarding body or exam board)

“A flowchart from Ofqual would be really helpful in supporting staff through the process.” (SLT - Senior leadership team)

Some respondents made particular suggestions to help centres make objective judgements.

“Only using material done at the centre in test conditions removes most subjectivity.” (Teacher - responding in a personal capacity)

“Exemplars at each grade are helpful and grade boundaries for any assessment materials are necessary.” (Teacher - responding in a personal capacity)

“Making objective judgements should be done after significant training on mitigating bias is completed by a majority of teachers and run by exam boards.” (Student)

“Compulsory cross-schools moderation would be valuable but is perhaps not feasible in the current socially distant climate.” (Local authority)

A number of respondents stressed that objectivity is important.

“Essential to do this.” (School or college)

“We believe that centres should be required to make a declaration alongside their submissions stating they have taken into account the interests of students with protected characteristics, within the meaning of Equalities Law.” (Other representative or interest group)

Some respondents suggested that objectivity may be hard to achieve.

“I cannot see how objectivity will be consistent.” (Teacher - responding in a personal capacity)

“When your own evidence suggests objective marking is hard even with well-trained examiners in essay based exams, how can you expect different of teachers without this training?” (Consultant)

“We are never going to have a perfect fit and have to do the best we can based on the evidence we have. Teachers are likely to give the benefit of the doubt based on limited evidence and so these grades will stand apart. To do otherwise

would penalise other learners who traditionally perform better in terminal examinations rather than consistently throughout. This is especially true for boys and some very bright students (boys and girls). This should be recognised in the procedure.” (School or college)

Question 7b

Do you have any comments on the proposed document: 'Information for centres about making objective judgements', in relation to unconscious effects on objectivity?

There were 109 responses to this question. In many of these comments, respondents simply indicated that they were satisfied with these requirements or noted that they had no comments to make. Some of the other comments we received related to wider policy decisions and therefore fall out of scope for this consultation. We summarise below the remaining responses – those which relate specifically to the 'Unconscious effects on objectivity' section of our proposed document.

Some respondents gave specific suggestions for additions to this section of the document.

"Specific guidance on how to monitor and tackle potential biases across different pupil characteristics (for example, socioeconomic background) is limited. We would like to see this covered in more detail, with a particular focus on actionable guidance around how centres can measure and monitor any signs of bias towards certain groups." (Other representative or interest group)

"We think it is [...] worth stressing here biases based on other characteristics inadvertently discriminating against students who are different from those who are making judgements, including sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, religion, family structure, where a learner lives, socio-economic status or background and language. To omit these could be a missed opportunity." (Awarding body or exam board)

"There are other unconscious bias factors that could be listed, or it could make it clear that the types of bias that may impact a decision listed is not exhaustive. For example, conformity bias could disadvantage learners who answer questions in an unconventional way. Conformity bias could also pose difficulties in the context of internal quality assurance processes if a less experienced teacher, with a different opinion, may not speak up if their opinion differs from the head of department, for example. Deferring to more senior staff judgements because they are senior staff could inadvertently advantage or disadvantage learners." (Awarding body or exam board)

“Support from a specialist teacher, e.g. a QToD [qualified teacher of the deaf], would be helpful here.” (Other representative or interest group)

Some respondents raised concerns about some of the effects referenced in the proposed document.

“Elsewhere you state that recent work is the most reliable, especially as it will be conducted in class, under exam conditions. We will be largely basing our judgments on these assessments (due to take place in the weeks after Easter).” (Teacher - responding in a personal capacity)

“Recent academic data should be given much more consideration than any other previous data. [...] It is well known that many students, particularly from disadvantaged backgrounds, do not undertake sufficient preparation for any provided assessments until the last month(s) before the final examination.” (Student)

“I think it is legitimate to have a deliberate focus on recent work. This would be conscious rather than unconscious and therefore should not affect objectivity.” (SLT - Senior leadership team)

“We note that the guidance about outlier effects is in conflict with the earlier guidance about standards, supporting our earlier point that the requirement about standards is inappropriate in the current context.” (Other representative or interest group)

Some respondents gave suggestions for how centres might avoid unconscious effects on objectivity.

“Robust data analysis will minimise this.” (Local authority)

“External moderation of samples will ensure this doesn't happen.” (Teacher - responding in a personal capacity)

Some respondents suggested that centres would require additional support in order to be able to avoid unconscious effects on objectivity.

“Useful to highlight the types of bias. Perhaps offer a troubleshooting/problem solving section to aid schools in overcoming them.” (Consultant)

“How would you expect this to be evidenced? What process would you suggest undertaking to remove these unconscious effects?” (SLT - Senior leadership team)

“Again these are vague indications with a lack of clarity about how each centre would mitigate these effects.” (Teacher - responding in a personal capacity)

“For subjects that are traditionally more subjective (arts; English), this information from exam boards would be welcomed as soon as possible so that judgements can be made on prior as well as current and future assessment tasks.” (Teacher - responding in a personal capacity)

A number of respondents suggested that it might be difficult to address unconscious effects on objectivity, with some raising concerns about teacher workload.

“Good luck with that. Whatever you say, there will be some issues here.” (Parent or carer)

“Agree but not sure how this can be truly monitored to ensure that all learners are awarded the grades they deserve.” (School or college)

“It would be difficult for individual teachers to implement this, when they recognise the style of a student’s writing, blind marking will not work.” (Teacher - responding in a personal capacity)

“I don't understand what the phrase 'unconscious effects' means. I don't know how anyone can be conscious of anyone else's unconsciousness, because their own unconsciousness would logically get in the way. I'm not comfortable with this psychological theory being imported into the discussion.” (Teacher - responding in a personal capacity)

“It is useful but the time available for this is very tight when the rest of the school has to be taught and catch up done too.” (School or college)

“This seems a very in-depth approach which again could have a massive impact on teacher workload.” (Teacher - responding in a personal capacity) |

“Any training must have minimal impact on workload for teachers.” (Academy chain) |

Question 7c

Do you have any comments on the proposed document: ‘Information for centres about making objective judgements’, in relation to using previous data to check on the objectivity of judgements being made?

There were 126 responses to this question. In many of these comments, respondents simply indicated that they were satisfied with these requirements or noted that they had no comments to make. Some of the other comments we received related to wider policy decisions and therefore fall out of scope for this consultation. We summarise below the remaining responses – those which relate specifically to the ‘Using previous data to check on the objectivity of judgements being made’ section of our proposed document.

A number of respondents suggested that a centre’s previous data might not correlate with students’ performance this year, and so previous data should only be used with caution.

“Historic trends are not as valuable / stable for smaller centres and this needs to be taken into consideration.” (SLT - Senior leadership team)

“As we are a small special school, using previous data to check on the objectivity of judgements being made will not be overly helpful as the academic ability can vary so greatly from one year to the next that different qualifications are followed.” (School or college)

“Previous data will not support schools who have students making exceptional progress.” (Consultant)

“In mathematics we have moved recently to a new specification with only one year of exam data. Historical data may not be relevant in this case.” (Teacher - responding in a personal capacity)

“Centres who have had significant changes meaning previous data is less valid, e.g. to teaching time or entry pattern, or who have very varied cohorts, should be able to explain changes in their quality assurance.” (Teacher - responding in a personal capacity)

“It needs to be made very clear that the evidence-based grading process in 2021 is very different to that of any previous year and that different grade profiles are not necessarily a reflection of a change in standards or ‘grade inflation’.” (Other representative or interest group)

“I don’t think previous data should be used as each person has their own external circumstances and people could have been underperforming.” (Student - private, home-educated of any age)

A number of respondents stressed that, whatever the previous data suggests, ultimately each student’s teacher assessed grade should reflect their performance.

“The final paragraph is a helpful summary, but the principle that an individual student’s grade “is determined by the specific performance of that student in relation to the relevant qualification” as the primary source of evidence for the grading judgement, we believe, should appear earlier in this section to reflect its importance in this context too. [...] We believe that the limitations and context of the data needs to be stressed so that its true value and relevance can be carefully weighed up by the user. For example, the strength of the data as a guide for small and large centre cohorts is one consideration that could reignite concerns about fairness, so the context and purpose need to be clear. We believe that the underlying principle of using data is that it needs to be relevant, used correctly and that its purpose should only be as another source of evidence that adds assurance to the judgements made based on the performance evidence of the individual student.” (Awarding body or exam board)

“This is contradictory and not well thought out. [...] Schools cannot look at individual performance and then cast an eye over previous school results. They are entirely different metrics.” (School or college)

“Schools should be encouraged to use this to inform the overall shape of cohort data but not to limit the potential success of any individual student or their grade.” (Teacher - responding in a personal capacity)

“It should be decided on a candidate basis and not based on a school’s track record. Some people don’t follow patterns of grades and these students will be penalized.” (Student)

Some respondents suggested that previous data would be of limited use for private candidates.

“Any previous data will not normally be available or appropriate to use for home educated candidates.” (Other representative or interest group)

“Home educated pupils use a different learning style than schooled children and therefore previous data may be harder to attain and without a relationship with the centre almost impossible to determine.” (Student - private, home-educated of any age)

There was the suggestion that the section on use of previous data on the objectivity of judgements being made needs to be consistent with other guidance on the use of data this summer.

“There are other documents that talk about the use of data and a careful read across is needed to make sure that the information is consistent. Some readers may pick up on nuances and if there are any requirements about data (should it be used) these need to be clear so that everyone has the same opportunity to have the same understanding. For example, in this document “a centre could look back at previous years’ data, for example, over the past 2 to 5 years, where this is available” contrasts with the draft Information for Heads of Centre (etc) page 4, “As part of their overall quality assurance, centres should consider the grades for this year’s cohort compared to cohorts from previous years when exams have taken place.”” (Awarding body or exam board)

Respondents made various suggestions for additions to this section of the proposed document.

“[We agree] that centres could consider previous data and any historic systematic over- or under-predictions of grades for pupils with protected characteristics. We believe that this should also be extended to considering any historic differences in the grades predicted to students from different socioeconomic backgrounds, and this should be explicitly mentioned in the guidance alongside looking at data on students with protected characteristics.” (Other representative or interest group)

“It is very important that this section is updated to clarify the difference between predicted grades and the grades being produced this year. The fourth, fifth and

sixth paragraphs helpfully attempt to point out contextual factors relating to any check and that there may be limitations. However the difference between a predicted grade and the grade being produced this year – at the end and not in the middle of the course – should be mentioned specifically as one such factor which might mean any conclusions cannot be directly translated.” (Other representative or interest group)

“Previous data should be used provided it has been gathered with access arrangements in place where disabled and deaf candidates are concerned.” (Other representative or interest group)

A number of respondents suggested that more detail would be needed on how centres can use previous data to check on the objectivity of judgements.

“It would be useful to understand how these checks might be made.” (Academy chain)

“Will this be done on a centre level, a subject level or a 'groups' of learners level? What if you are on a rising trajectory? Will that be taken into account?” (SLT - Senior leadership team)

“As a small [centre] with small cohorts, prior data can be irrelevant. Could standardised predictions of ability such as Alis or Yellis for these year groups in relation to prior year groups (i.e. value add etc) be used as part of this?” (Teacher - responding in a personal capacity)

“Further guidance may be needed on balancing what could be quite different grade distributions in 2020 compared to previous years.” (University or higher education institution)

“What should a centre do if it does discover such a discrepancy? How will we be supported in making adjustments?” (School or college)

“Sensible proposal - how will it be enforced?” (Consultant)

A number of respondents raised concerns about the impact on teacher workload of using previous data to check on the objectivity of judgements.

“Whilst I am in favour of this proposal, I think it could potentially take significant workload from staff in centres to make this data available to staff to use in their judgements.” (Teacher - responding in a personal capacity)

“Teacher workload **MUST** be considered in using previous data to avoid unconscious bias.” (Local authority)

Question 7d

Do you have any comments on the proposed document: ‘Information for centres about making objective judgements’, in relation to reviewing judgements?

There were 99 responses to this question. In many of these comments, respondents simply indicated that they were satisfied with these requirements or noted that they had no comments to make. Some of the other comments we received related to wider policy decisions and therefore fall out of scope for this consultation. We summarise below the remaining responses – those which relate specifically to the ‘Reviewing judgements’ section of our proposed document.

Respondents made a range of specific comments in relation to this section of the proposed document.

“Reviewing should check the conditions in which the work was originally undertaken.” (Other representative or interest group)

“The centre review of grading decisions should include consideration of the performance data, relevant contextual information and the evidence of a student’s performance in relation to the relevant qualification. [...] We believe that the student performance is the primary source of grading evidence and that this should be given greater prominence.” (Awarding body or exam board)

“This needs to incorporate an understanding of the impact the various unconscious effects on objectivity might have on the internal quality assurance process.” (Other representative or interest group)

“The final part of the second paragraph for some reason only highlights the pitfalls of over-compensation. Although it is said that this is just “for example”, by picking out over-compensation specifically there is a danger that any under-compensation would be overlooked. As such the wording should be changed from “not over-compensated” to either “not over- or under-compensated” or “appropriately compensated”.” (Other representative or interest group)

“The centre should explicitly declare they have actively considered equalities law.” (Other representative or interest group)

Some respondents suggested that more clarity is required on this stage of the process.

“The review of the judgements once again has a lack of clarity or of the way in which the judgements are come to.” (Teacher - responding in a personal capacity)

“Needs to make sure it is clear how internal moderation of work should happen and how it is documented.” (SLT - Senior leadership team)

“Really difficult for anyone to gainsay a teacher’s judgement on a student who has taught them for 2 or 4 years. Need very clear guidance on the expectations of teachers in making judgements and then SLT to check teachers have followed the process.” (School or college)

A number of respondents suggested that this stage of the process could be time-consuming for teachers.

“This level of review is likely to be time-consuming, especially for large centres, which may in turn reduce the amount of time available for teaching and assessment in the summer term.” (Other representative or interest group)

“Centres need allow significant time for this stage. Assessment needs to be finished before June so that standardisation within subjects is completed, this review is done and then the outrageously onerous task of entering grades to awarding body websites can be completed and checked.” (School or college)

Equality Impact

Question 8

Do you consider that there are any equalities impacts arising from our technical proposals which we have not previously identified?

There were 127 responses to this question. In many of these comments, respondents simply indicated that they did not identify any equalities impacts arising from our technical proposals. Some of the other comments we received related to wider policy points, rather than to our technical proposals, and therefore fall out of scope for this consultation. We summarise below the remaining responses – those which relate specifically to our technical proposals.

A number of respondents expressed concern in relation to those students whose learning has been most severely disrupted by the pandemic.

“In order that pupils with protected characteristics or medical conditions are not disadvantaged in this process there must be some way for schools to provide teacher assessed grades for those candidates whose portfolios, through no fault of their own, may not have met minimum criterion. There should be a process of discussion to support the awarding in exceptional cases.” (Other representative or interest group)

“Not all students will have had the same access to support during the pandemic: some will have suffered from prolonged periods of self-isolation or from personal issues brought about by the pandemic, some will have suffered far greater lost learning than others. We think this will be particularly true of those with protected characteristics or who come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Teachers will face tough decisions when reviewing evidence from such students that may be limited or potentially misleading and, in some cases, it will be difficult to arrive at a grade which reflects the overall performance of such a learner.” (Awarding body or exam board)

“Students will be adversely affected where certain inequalities exist, particularly during the first period of lockdown where access to education was very limited if IT access was poor. The judgement on whether the curriculum has been delivered needs to be considered in these instances.” (School or college)

Some concerns were raised regarding the exam boards' support materials. There was a suggestion that students from lower socioeconomic groups might be less likely to have access to questions from past papers and thereby be disadvantaged. There were also concerns regarding access to exam board questions for disabled students and students from lower socioeconomic groups.

“We have set out our concerns about the proposals to make publicly available the questions that make up the additional assessment materials. It is important to reiterate the risk that this will appear to create a disadvantage for those who are unable to access them because of digital poverty or because they have a special characteristic which requires modified formats.” (Awarding body or exam board)

Some made comments in relation to teachers' judgements taking into account where reasonable adjustments were not in place. While one respondent suggested this could make teacher judgements open to challenge, another welcomed the approach.

“The only such impact would arise from judgements being made on evidence gathered in conditions in which appropriate, agreed and necessary access arrangements were not in place. It is good that Heads of Centre have to declare that this is not the case or that such a failure has been taken into account.” (Other representative or interest group)

A number of respondents identified a need for further guidance of various kinds, or for the proposed guidance to be less open to interpretation.

“To ensure there is an equal process is critical. There is still an opportunity for different centres to interpret the guidance in different ways.” (School or college)

“SEN students may find the whole process overwhelming and need clarity on what it all means for them in a simple but informative way.” (Exams officer or manager)

“Home educated candidates who require access arrangements will require centres to have reference to explicit guidance to ensure they are not disadvantaged.” (Other representative or interest group)

“More detail needed as to how access arrangements should be handled (a) generally in any controlled assessments run by centres and (b) more specifically, when a candidate has had to enter at a different centre for 2021, having previously been assessed for access arrangements at another.” (Other)

“The application of Access Arrangements will be complicated because not all AA have been applied the whole way through the course. Guidance on how to retrospectively apply AA to evidence would be very useful and ensure that students are treated fairly.” (School or college)

“Detailed guidance for teachers on the use of "special consideration" in determining the affect that:

- the lack of access to certain support students receive in centre such as readers, scribes etc has had on work completed at home during lock down
- students have experience death/loss within the immediate family and/or carer and the impact this has had which is taken into account during a "normal" academic year
- ill health

This support is vital to teachers especially due to the impact that some students will have experienced this year, when this is not something teachers would normally have to do in the course of their normal practice.” (Academy chain)

Some respondents raised concerns in relation to the proposal that, where illness or other personal circumstances might have temporarily affected a student’s performance, centres should bear this in mind in their judgements.

“As previously mentioned in relation to the application of special consideration that if not properly applied in a fair way across centres will lead to discrimination of protected groups who may have suffered significantly more during this extraordinary period than others in ways that the adjustments and provisions within the framework do not provide for.” (Academy chain)

“I am concerned about the equality impact of remote learning on students with SEND (shown in ongoing research documents widely available) and on those who have been unable to access remote learning in any adequate way. It’s not clear how (if) these should be taken into account when deciding grades.”
(Consultant)

There was a suggestion that the external quality assurance sampling approach should reflect the demographic make-up of the student cohort.

“Great care must be taken to ensure any sample of centres is broadly representative of the whole demographic. It may be that the sampling process inadvertently creates a situation where schools and colleges with higher proportions of students with a protected characteristic or from areas of heightened disadvantage are selected for detailed sampling. This may create a risk that students from such centres are more likely to have their grade adjusted. The greater risk is that teachers and leadership teams who are under the most strain and have the least resources are those who find themselves responding to intense and resource-heavy scrutiny.” (Awarding body or exam board)

There was also a suggestion that students from lower socioeconomic groups may be less likely to appeal their grades, and therefore that they would be disadvantaged if the external quality assurance is not robust enough to address teacher assessed grades that are too severe.

One respondent suggested that, rather than considering impacts on student groups, heads of centre should consider each student individually, as each student may have different needs and circumstances.

There was a suggestion that, when considering equalities impacts, Ofqual should continue to take a broad view and not be restricted to protected characteristics.

“We agree that protected characteristics are a logical starting point for considering the impact of the alternative framework on different groups, but drawing from the results of the January consultation, we ask that Ofqual extends its commitment to equality to specifically take into account students with:

- Low socio-economic status
- Mental health needs
- Special educational needs

This would require Ofqual to put provisions and consideration in place which would mitigate negative impacts on such students where necessary and to measure and report on the impact of the alternative framework on them.” (Other representative or interest group)

Finally, there was a suggestion that an equalities analysis of this summer’s arrangements should be published alongside results.

“There are many possible equality impacts and we suggest that a full Equality Impact Assessment of this year’s awarding system be published at the same time as the results, including socio-economic status, provider type and provider size as well as the protected characteristics.” (Other representative or interest group)

Regulatory Impact

Question 9

Do you consider that there are any regulatory impacts arising from our technical proposals which we have not previously identified?

There were 94 responses to this question. In the vast majority of comments, respondents said they had not identified any additional regulatory impacts arising from our proposals, or that they did not have any further comments. Some of the comments we received related to wider policy points, rather than to our technical proposals, and therefore fall out of scope for this consultation. We summarise below the remaining responses – those which relate specifically to our technical proposals.

Some respondents repeated concerns raised in response to our earlier consultation, and reported in our decisions of 25 February, about teacher workload.

"Teachers and school leaders are facing extreme workloads beyond what can be fully resourced. The impact of Covid will have affected the well-being of many staff and therefore on their capacity to take on new activities. This has to be factored in when recognising that teachers are being required to take on assessment and quality assurance processes which are wholly new and have to be implemented almost before the full requirements and guidance has been created." (Awarding body or exam board)

"The proposals undoubtedly ask a lot of our teachers, work that would not in a usual year be required of them, and of course they have also been working in very challenging circumstances since the start of the pandemic. There simply isn't any slack in the system to allow them to take up extra duties without mitigations in place to reduce their workload in other areas. [Organisation] believes there should be guidance or clear expectations about teachers not having to perform administrative or ancillary tasks not related to the core mission of securing students their grades. There needs to be recognition that teachers don't have infinite capacity, and that there has to be give elsewhere to enable them to perform these tasks." (Other representative or interest group)

"Impact on teachers' terms and conditions to deal with appeals at a time when they are not paid to work" (Academy chain)

A few respondents raised concerns about potential fees that will be charged by centres to enable private candidates to receive a Teacher Assessed Grade, and the potential loss of any fees already paid if required to work with a new centre. It was suggested that costs could be reduced by limiting the amount of work centres are required to do to assess private candidates, and providing clear guidance on this. It was also suggested that there should be low or no cost for students to transfer between centres, or defer to a later exam series.

Two exam boards offering GCSE, AS and A level qualifications in England reported the expected regulatory impact of the proposals on their organisations.

“There are likely to be significant impacts of these conditions due to the need to implement them within a short timescale, including the need to: understand, share understanding internally, and ensure compliance with the new conditions; provide new, additional assessment materials for centres; provide new guidance on the TAG process for centres; establish a new process for reviewing centres’ internal quality assurance processes; establish a new process for external quality assurance of centre submissions; establish a new process for review of centre academic judgements through the appeals process; provide new, additional appeals guidance for centres; provide new, additional appeals guidance for candidates.” (Awarding body or exam board)

“As these proposals were published two weeks ago, it is difficult to provide an analysis of their full regulatory impact. We are engaged in ongoing modelling to anticipate the scale of impact of these proposals on resourcing and on our finances. Estimating the scale of this is difficult at this stage, as there are some significant variables, particularly in relation to the number of detailed centre quality assurance activities we may need to undertake and the number of appeals we may be required to process. Processing appeals could, according to one scenario, require the deployment of an additional one-thousand staff. Other costs are likely to include: the monitoring of centre quality assurance; monitoring of centre entry patterns and candidate eligibility; the creation of advice and guidance; the creation and provision of training and customer support; the development of systems for capturing proposed results and capturing details of centre quality assurance arrangements; the curation of additional assessment materials and their dissemination in digital formats; and intense engagement with stakeholders, government and the UK regulators. All of this will prove resource intensive and will have a significant impact on any rebate on entry fees we are able to provide to centres.” (Awarding body or exam board)

Appendix A

List of organisations that responded:

- 3A Tutors Ltd
- AQA
- ASCL (Association of school and college leaders)
- Association of Colleges (AoC)
- Atlantic Academy
- BATOD (British Association of Teachers of the Deaf)
- Beaconsfield High
- Bishop Heber High School
- Brantwood Specialist School
- Brentwood Ursuline Convent High School
- Bridgwater and Taunton College
- Budmouth Academy Weymouth
- Chipping Sodbury School
- City & Guilds
- Dallam School
- Dame Allan's Schools
- Dinnington High School
- Durham Johnston Comprehensive School
- East Riding of Yorkshire Council
- Ed Yourself – The Home education consultancy
- Edgbaston High School
- Exeter School
- Faregos Home Education
- Food Teachers Centre
- Foundry College
- Harrow School
- HEQA - the Home Educators' Qualifications Association

- Highfields School
- Immanuel College
- Incorporated Society of Musicians
- ISC (Independent Schools Council)
- Jersey College for Girls
- King Alfred School
- Loughborough College
- Luton Sixth Form College
- Malvern St James
- Mark Rutherford School
- Marlborough College
- Moor End Academy
- Mount Tamar School
- Nasen (National Association for Special Educational Needs)
- NASUWT (response received by email and not via the online consultation platform)
- National Education Union
- NCFE
- OCR
- Oxford High School GDST
- Pearson Education Limited
- Portsmouth College
- Radnor House Sevenoaks
- Reigate College
- Rossendale School
- Royal Russell School
- SHARE Multi-Academy Trust
- Social Mobility Commission
- Southport College
- St Helen and St Katharine

- Sutton Trust
- The Bell Foundation
- The King's School Worcester
- The Ladies' College
- The Sixth Form College, Colchester
- University and College Union
- University of Oxford
- University of Wolverhampton Multi Academy Trust
- Westfield School
- WJEC-CBAC
- Wolverhampton Grammar School



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