

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **ALTERNATIVE AWARDING ARRANGEMENTS – CCEA GCSE, AS AND A LEVEL QUALIFICATIONS**

#### **Will I definitely be awarded a result for each of my qualifications?**

Yes, all students who are entered by their school or college will be issued with qualification results in August so they can progress to the next stage of education, employment or training.

#### **How will qualifications be awarded?**

All CCEA exams have been cancelled. In place of CCEA exams in January, February and summer 2021, a student's grade in a subject will be based on their teacher's professional assessment of the evidenced standard at which they are performing. These will be known as Centre Determined Grades.

Teachers will make evidence-based decisions about the grade they recommend their students be issued. Wherever possible, a breadth of evidence should inform a teacher's assessment of their student's grade. This **may** include the student's performance in the CCEA Assessment Resource; in any non-examination assessments (including practical examinations, controlled assessment or coursework); other class tests and mock examinations; or any other work completed by students (for example practice examination questions, extended essays etc).

There are different arrangements for qualifications offered by English and Welsh Examination Boards and your school will be able to explain the arrangements for these qualifications.

#### **How are you taking account of the disruption due to COVID-19?**

Students will **not** be assessed on what they would have achieved if exams had gone ahead – which is what teachers were asked in 2020 - because many students

will not have covered all of the content that would have been required for the exams due to ongoing disruption.

To allow for this, the grades awarded in 2021 should be based on the evidenced standard at which the student is performing – their demonstrated knowledge, understanding and skills in the content they have covered.

**Schools can use evidence of students' performance against the specification from any point in the course.** In order to promote ongoing engagement by students in teaching and learning, schools and colleges can utilise evidence from during the current period of remote learning, as well as when students return to school. We are conscious that evidence generated later in the course is likely to be the most holistic. Schools and colleges will not, therefore, submit Centre Determined Grades to CCEA until towards the end of May 2021. We want to provide opportunities for every young person to progress and improve during the coming months and know that the work they are doing can contribute to their grades. At the same time, we know that some young people will find remote learning difficult and that more consistent evidence of the standard at which they are performing may come from earlier periods of the course.

As schools will be asked to assess the evidenced standard at which the student is performing, this means students **do not** have to have completed a specified amount of content, or demonstrate skills knowledge and understanding across every area of the specification as they would normally. Evidence may be gathered from all work that is in line with the specification. In this way, we are taking account of differential learning loss, as some students have suffered more disruption to their learning than others.

### **Will grades be similar to 2020?**

It is the intention that in order to ensure fairness to all students, every effort will be made to maintain standards. It is hoped that the training given to schools in assessing the Centre Determined Grades, will ensure a level of consistency between schools

and colleges and across the qualifications. It is likely that overall across our system grade outcomes in 2021 will be broadly similar to those awarded by Centres in 2020.

**Can practical examinations/controlled assessment/ coursework I have completed contribute to my qualification?**

Yes, this work (even if not fully completed) can be utilised as part of the evidence which centres consider to arrive at Centre Determined Grades.

**What evidence can be used by schools and colleges?**

Any evidence completed by students during the period of their course can be used to inform teachers' assessments. There is no time limit on the evidence and it may be relevant to **any area** of the course specification. The evidence must of course relate directly to the specification for which the candidate is entered.

**Is the Assessment Resource the same as an exam?**

No. To help teachers make objective decisions, CCEA will make available a set of assessment resources, which teachers can use with their students. We want to offer students the opportunity to take this CCEA Assessment Resource during April and May. This will be unseen, exam questions in the units or modules they would have taken if the exams had been held

It is likely that most students will only take the assessment resource in the mandatory units at GCSE and the reduced assessment at AS and A2, as they will not have had the opportunity to cover content across the entire specification. However, some candidates may wish to take papers in all areas of the course.

The Assessment Resource is very different from an external examination. It will be marked by a class teacher and will be only one piece of evidence to inform and support the assessment of a student's abilities. It is not high stakes like an external exam and will be used alongside a range of other evidence.

We hope it will help teachers in the process of making accurate and consistent judgements by providing additional evidence towards the end of the course and also encourage pupil engagement over the next five months. It is an opportunity for students to show their knowledge and skills in the qualification, knowing that other evidence can also be considered

### **Is the Assessment Resource compulsory?**

No, schools and colleges may decide they do not require the evidence from the Assessment Resource. For example, on a return to school, teachers, particularly where there is already a significant body of evidence, may wish to use the next few months to focus on the teaching and learning of specific elements of the course that have not been covered but which are important for progression. However, schools and colleges may of course decide they wish all of their students to take the papers.

The Department of Education strongly recommends every candidate who wishes to have the opportunity to take the assessment resource in a particular qualification should be facilitated to do so, even if the centre has decided not to take them more generally.

### **What if schools remain closed?**

If schools remain closed, students may be able to take the assessment resource at home. It will be used as evidence alongside the range of other evidence which teachers have available to inform their assessments.

### **What if we haven't covered the content of some of the questions?**

Schools and colleges will have the freedom to omit questions from assessment resources, if their students have not had reasonable opportunity to cover the content which is being assessed.

### **Will we still be taught everything?**

Schools and colleges are encouraged to cover as much of the specification as possible to support progression. However, we recognise the significant disruption which students have faced during their course.

Schools and colleges may decide to continue to prioritise the units which they had prioritised when examination assessment was reduced prior to examinations being cancelled.

### **I scored poorly in my mock examinations, will this affect my overall grade?**

Teachers have been asked to draw on a range of available evidence to inform their assessment and will wish to use more than one source of evidence such as a mock examination. It is vitally important that young people continue to engage with teaching and learning for the remainder of the academic year and are given opportunities to progress and develop. Schools and colleges will wish to give further opportunities for students to demonstrate what they know, understand and can do.

This is why schools and colleges will submit their outcomes to CCEA towards the end of May. All young people will also be given the opportunity to take the CCEA Assessment Resource, which may be used as evidence to inform their teachers' assessments.

### **How will you ensure outcomes are fair and consistent between schools and colleges?**

Quality assurance is embedded throughout the alternative awarding arrangements. Significant support, guidance and training will be provided to strengthen teachers' and lecturers' understanding of how to consistently apply standards and make accurate assessment judgements. In addition, throughout June 2021, CCEA will carry out an external quality assurance process looking at the grades submitted and reviewing samples of students' work from all schools and colleges to make sure the grades submitted accurately reflect the evidence provided.

### **When will I get my results?**

CCEA is working closely with awarding organisations in England and Wales, with the aim to agree a date for the release of results across all three jurisdictions. This will ensure students in Northern Ireland are not disadvantaged in regard to university admissions and all students here, including those taking qualifications with English and Welsh examination boards, will receive their results at the same time. Results will not be any later than the dates previously envisaged for exam results (24 August 2021 for AS and A Level and 27 August for GCSE) but may be earlier. As soon as a date is agreed, CCEA will advise schools, colleges and students.

### **Will my grade be affected by my school's previous performance?**

No, if CCEA has any concerns about the profile of grades submitted in any subject, it will initiate professional dialogue with the school or college. Students' grades will be based on the evidence which they produce and that evidence should be assessed against the specification for which the student is entered. Schools who do not have evidence of process or are not able to demonstrate that evidence has been assessed in line with the specification may be asked to revisit their grades awarded.

### **Will an algorithm be used to work out my grade?**

No algorithm will be used. Schools and colleges will submit grades to CCEA towards the end of May 2021. Throughout June 2021, CCEA will carry out an external quality assurance process looking at the grades submitted from all centres and reviewing samples of students' work to make sure the grades submitted accurately reflect the evidence provided.

### **Will CCEA change my grade?**

It is important to ensure fair and consistent standards between schools and colleges. Grades submitted by schools and colleges at the end of May are not the final awarded grades. CCEA will be carrying out external quality assurance across all centres in Northern Ireland.

If candidates' work has been reviewed and there is evidence to suggest judgments made in a subject or subjects are not secure, schools and colleges will be asked to re-run their processes and for grades to be resubmitted. If after this process, grades submitted are not secure, CCEA will provide support teams to work with centres where evidence and grades do not comply with the appropriate standard. Ultimately, and only in the most severe of circumstances, CCEA may withhold permission for the centre in a subject or subjects to proceed to award and may commence an investigation.

### **Are these qualifications less valuable?**

No, the level of demand and standard for the qualifications is the same as in previous years. Higher Education providers and employers will see these as valid qualifications. Schools and learners should cover as much content as is possible to facilitate progression.

### **What about non-CCEA GCSEs or A Levels?**

Your school will let you know if you are taking qualifications with non-CCEA awarding organisations and provide you with details about these qualifications.

### **For AS students - will my AS grades count towards my A Level in 2022?**

The Education Minister has asked CCEA to examine how best to adapt GCSE and A Level qualifications for 2022 to ease burden and reflect the ongoing disruption to teaching and learning.

The Minister will make a further announcement on awarding arrangements for 2022 including the potential use of AS data for A Level awarding by the end of March 2021 or as soon as possible thereafter.

**For GCSE students - will the outcomes of my January 2020 or November 2020 GCSE examinations contribute towards my final grade?**

The outcomes of these examinations are one source of evidence, which schools or colleges may wish to consider as part of a range of evidence. Students should, however, be reassured that wherever possible a range of evidence will inform a teacher's assessment of their grade.



