



BTEC International  
qualifications

# Awarding Results in 2021

Guidance for certificating



## Guidance for certificating and non-certificating learners

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## 1. Introduction

In early March, [we wrote to all centres](#) that offer BTEC and other Pearson vocational qualifications to confirm the broad approaches that we would be using to issue grades this summer for learners expecting to complete one of our vocational qualifications. Our response has been determined by actions taken in the UK for regulated qualifications and from our intention to ensure fairness and equity in our response across our global certification.

We confirmed that while teaching and learning should continue to be delivered, in recognition of the cancellation of exams and the impact on internal assessment, centres will use evidence across the breadth of the course to inform a Qualification-level Teacher Assessed Grade ('Q-TAG').

We promised to provide more information as soon as we could about how this will work for you and your learners. This document sets out initial guidance on the process teachers and centres will need to follow to submit these Q-TAGs to Pearson for certification. **A deadline of 18<sup>th</sup> June 2021 is in place for those seeking to make university applications for 2021 entry**, so that learners expecting to complete their BTEC this summer can receive a final grade in August. Outlined below are details of the process we have set out for determining a Q-TAG for each eligible learner, and for building and submitting the evidence to support this as part of the Quality Assurance process.

We are also providing more detail on the following topics:

- List of qualifications within scope of this year's arrangements for awarding
- Guidance for [license-linked qualifications](#) within these suites
- Mitigations for learners not due to certificate this summer ('mid-flight' learners)

This guidance will be updated when more detailed information is confirmed, and we are committed to giving you as much information as we can as soon as we are able to. **Learners not certificating in August 2021 should continue to follow the [adaptations guidance](#).**

Pearson is working to ensure that learners receive their results and progress with confidence this year. In doing so, we have been mindful to make the process as simple as possible and give you guidance as soon as possible.

Commented [CE1]: should we remove broad - if we are saying this is what we did

Commented [MP2R1]: I think we need to leave in as this is a development in approach within broad principles.

Commented [CE3]: what happens if they don't want a cert until Sept/Oct - will this still apply? if we pushed centres to later claims can they avoid all this? i.e. NL centres don't finish until July and some only claim in the new academic year

Commented [DK4]: Could this mega sentence be simplified by breaking it into 2 or 3 shorter ones?

Commented [PSS5]: yes I have raised this in wider group as well for portal it needs to be flexible

Commented [MP6]: [@Peacock, Sally](#) can we find a form of words for this?

Commented [RS7]: Hi Phil, the spelling is a contentious issue!!! To cut a long story short we have gone with License for all UK comms.

Commented [DK8]: licence if a noun

## Guidance for certificating and non-certificating learners

We are committed to supporting you and your learners through what we know is an unsettling and difficult time. Please contact [us](#) if you need additional support or have questions about the alternative arrangements this year.

**Cindy Rampersaud**  
Senior Vice President

### Summary

We have worked very closely with stakeholders to ensure we can award results this year, that learners are not disadvantaged and that they can progress. What is of utmost importance to us is that we continue to work closely with you, to make sure the process is as seamless as possible over the coming months.

In England, Ofqual has introduced a new regulatory framework, called the [VTQ Contingency Regulatory Framework \(VCRF\)](#). The VCRF will permit Awarding Organisations to issue results based on alternative evidence including teachers' judgements of learners' performance when exams do not take place and/or when learners cannot complete all internal assessment. In the interests of fairness and equity across our qualifications, Pearson will follow these principles for International qualifications.

A summary of our decisions is listed below and what this means for International BTECs will be outlined in this guidance document.

- **Internal assessment should continue where possible** as it is important in supporting continued learning, as well as providing evidence to inform results awarded through alternative arrangements. However, we recognise that the disruption to learning means that, like external exams, internal assessment will have been, and will continue to be, affected, and learners are not expected to complete all unit assessments.
- The performance standard for vocational qualifications should be **broadly the same as in previous years**.
- Learners' vocational qualification **results will be issued on or before 10 August for level 3 and 12 August for level 2** for the majority of learners where Qtags have been submitted by 18<sup>th</sup> June, other results will be on rolling programme as in previous years.
- For mid-flight learners certificating in 2022, the previously issued rules on adaptation should be maintained.

Commented [MP9]: check link

Commented [MP10R9]: @Radford, Sarah can we check if this is the same for UK and Int?

Commented [RS11R9]: @Myers, Phil @Peacock, Sally this link in our comms goes to the generic help portal <https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/contact-us.html> and I don't know if it is where we normally send Int customers. We have included the same link in the Feb Int Bulletin so it's up to Sally whether we leave as is. Thanks.

Commented [MP12]: @Peacock, Sally are dates ok?

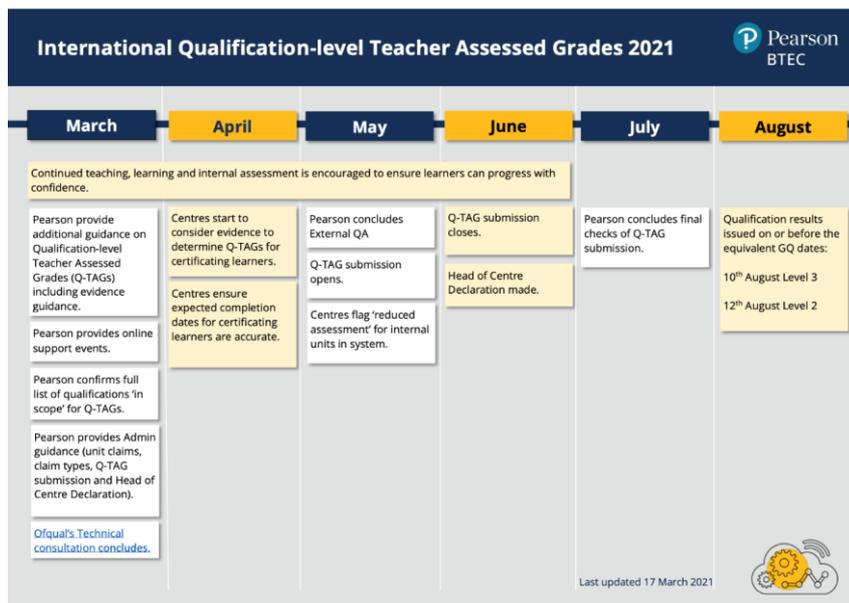
Commented [MP13R12]:

Commented [PS14R12]: yes if centres get grades in on time but we need flexibility see Eddies comment above.

Commented [MP15R12]: @Peacock, Sally we need a form of words to account for this- any thoughts?

## Guidance for certificating and non-certificating learners

### Timeline for the Q-TAG process for learners certificating in August 2021



Commented [MP16]: @Peacock, Sally some dates in this- I may need to get the original redesigned...if changes needed

2. .

### Arrangements for awarding results in 2021

Commented [MP17]: I think we can delete this page

Commented [PS18R17]: agree will confuse

#### Terminology

A grade issued based on the judgement of teachers, based on various sources of evidence, will be referred to as a 'Teacher Assessed Grade' (TAG), for Vocational Qualifications. We recognise that, in determining a 'TAG', there will be more than one individual teacher involved in doing this, and furthermore that senior leadership within a school or college will need to review these judgements to ensure they **are objective and** reflect the available alternative evidence.

#### Learner eligibility

- For certificating learners only, you will submit a Qualification-level 'Teacher Assessed Grade' (Q-TAG) to enable qualification results to be issued for learners completing relevant BTEC qualifications this year.
- For certificating learners, **the Q-TAG replaces previous guidance on 'reduced assessment'** where previously we had acknowledged that not all assessment may be completed.
- Sufficient evidence will need to be available for centres to put forward a Q-TAG. We outline in this guidance a definition of sufficient evidence.
- Learners due/ready for assessment between 1 August 2020 and 31 August 2021 and who need to certificate in August 2021 are eligible for the relevant arrangements.

Commented [MP19]: Check dates

For non-certificating learners ('mid-flight' learners) the Q-TAG process cannot be used. Instead, the 'reduced assessment' mitigation continues. Please find guidance for 'mid-flight' learners (learners who are not due to certificate in August 2021), in section 13.

Commented [MP20]: This hasn't been explicitly clear in March comms so we probably need to draw this out

Commented [MP21]: revise

# Guidance for certificating and non-certificating learners

## Standardisation and Quality Assurance

In releasing this guidance our aim is to ensure centres can take forward a standardised approach to determining grades, based on available sources of evidence. As you will expect, we undertake Quality Assurance (QA) activities, to ensure that learners, centres, and stakeholders can have confidence in the results awarded this year. More information on the QA processes is in section [11](#).

As you will be aware, centres are required to sign up to a range of centre policies in relation to the operation of Quality Assurance in more normal times. **We can confirm that centres will use existing policies that are in place to ensure the internal verification of Q-TAGs. An additional Q-TAG Centre Policy is shared in [Section 15](#), and you must adhere to this** when your centre commences determining the holistic Q-TAG for learners. **You must confirm you have followed this process, at the point of Q-TAG submission and Head of Centre Declaration.**

## Useful Links

- [Awarding Results in 2021](#) - our main webpage for guidance and support
- [Contact us](#)
- [Events](#) - filter for the appropriate event in the Qualification drop-down
- [Teaching support](#)
- [FAQs](#)

Commented [MP22]: check

Commented [EM23]: This is in section 11 not 12

Commented [MP24]: Reduce as much as possible- in summary we are not doing this for International because Ofqual told us to but because it is fair.

Commented [MP25R24]: Can we remove FAQs- I think its confusing for International

Commented [MP26R24]: [@Rowan, Letitia](#) [@Peacock Sally](#) I'd like to remove ref to FAQs as confusing?

### 3. Qualifications covered in this guidance

This guide covers BTEC qualifications from Entry Level to Level 3 where a Q-TAG can be submitted for certificating learners. This includes:

- BTEC Level 1 Entry and Introductory Suite (from 2016)\*\*
- BTEC Specialist programmes from Entry to Level 3\*\*
- BTEC PSD, Workskills and Skilled for Life\*\*
- International BTEC Level 2
- BTEC 2010 Level 3 Nationals
- International BTEC Level 3
- BTEC Level 3/4 Foundation Diploma Art and Design.

\*Please **check the detailed list of** [qualifications](#) to confirm whether your course is 'in-scope' of the Q-TAG process. Qualifications within these suites that form part of an apprenticeship are out of scope and should continue to be assessed.

\*\*All content for these qualifications must be taught and learners should only be issued with a Q-TAG as a last resort.

### 4. Qualifications not covered in this guidance

We will be releasing separate guidance that will cover:

- BTEC Qualifications Level 4-7 (including Higher Nationals)
- Level 1-7 SRF programmes and SRF Higher Nationals
- Functional Skills and ESOL
- T Levels.

### 5. Arrangements for awarding results

#### Unit-level information for certificating learners

If unit-level internal assessment has been completed, **you should ensure all evidence of these internal assessments is retained.** This is important to maintain an accurate record of the assessment that has taken place. Qualification results will be based on the Q-TAG that has been submitted, instead of any banked units.

As results for certificating learners will be issued at qualification-level, you will need to make a holistic judgement, based on the available evidence. This means you will make judgements based on banked assessment evidence, as well as alternative evidence, where exams do not take place and/or when learners cannot complete all internal assessment. Unit-level results will not be issued to certificating learners this year, to ensure fairness and parity with the General Qualifications process, and in recognition of the varied disruption to learners. We are working with HEIs to ensure that learners can progress based on their qualification-level result.

In terms of teaching and learning, to ensure learners can progress with confidence, **you should prioritise units that are set out by HEI admissions as essential to the offer.** You will be asked to confirm you have done this through the submission of the Q-TAG and accompanying Head of Centre Declaration (HOCD).

Unit-level grades are also important for the purposes of 'topping-up' to a larger qualification. Though we recognise not all assessment will have been completed, the learners record should be an accurate reflection of the assessment they have completed on their course. We will be providing more information on the process for 'Top-Ups' when it is finalised.

To recognise that, in many cases, not all of the unit-level assessment will have been completed, **the Q-TAG should be based on a holistic judgement arrived at through the evaluation of evidence of actual learner performance, either through completed unit level assessments or alternative evidence. You can find out more about alternative evidence in section 6.**

#### Recognising that not all assessment will have taken place

Throughout this academic year, we have been adapting requirements of the qualifications to support centres to focus on continued teaching and learning. This included [assessment adaptations](#), accommodating social distancing and adapting to remote delivery. Late last year we announced the 'reduced assessment' mitigation,

Commented [MP27]: but presumably not register on EOL - suggest we say 'retain unit grades on your internal systems' or similar

Commented [MP28R27]: If they do still bank then it would be better to ref that NOP not issued in this paragraph for clarity

Commented [MP29R27]: @Peacock, Sally @Rowan, Letitia grateful of view here

Commented [PS30R27]: We should leave so aligned with UK in case a learner doesn't complete this year or next, it is also a way of evidence gathering is we aren't happy with the QTAG

Commented [RL31R27]: @Peacock, Sally @Myers, Phil if centres are not required to add unit grades onto EOL I think we need to make that clear. It is their internal records that should be used as we may need access to these at a later date?

Commented [MP32]: third person now- but should we continue with 'you'?

Commented [MP33]: both links need revision

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which intended to further support the continuation of teaching and learning, by creating time.

Considering the continued disruption and the cancellation of exams, to enable certificating learners to progress, in February we announced that we would be requesting a qualification-level Teacher Assessed Grade to enable qualification results to be issued.

The principle this year is that a learner's performance should be used to determine the final qualification grade submission (Q-TAG), and whilst the sources of evidence might not be the usual sources of evidence for every learner, such as completed internally assessed units, the evidence used should be derived from actual learner work from taught course content, and not a teacher judgement on a learner's *potential*. This means that where learners might not have completed the full course, they may still be securely awarded a qualification grade by the centre because there has been **enough evidence to satisfy the centre that a learner is performing at a specific qualification grade**. This means that incomplete internal assessment may be sufficient in providing that evidence.

For certificating learners, the Q-TAG may be based on incomplete internal assessments.

### **A Qualification-level Teacher Assessed Grade (Q-TAG) should:**

- be a holistic judgement, based on the evidence available, for the content that has been taught
- reflect the evidence that is available
- reflect the grade the learner is performing at
- be agreed by the Head of Centre before submission
- be easily explained to the learner, through the quality of the evidence used and how the evidence has been gathered to arrive at the final grade, should the learner seek to appeal their Q-TAG result
- overall, should not result in a different distribution of results at a cohort level to previous years unless there is an explanation to support this
- only be issued where there is sufficient evidence to do so – this means that centres may need to ensure additional learner assessment or alternative evidence is generated in support of the Q-TAG. We have provided further detail below on what counts as sufficient evidence.

## 6. Qualification-Level Teacher Assessed Grade (QTAG) for certificating learners

### Introduction

This section will set out how you will approach determining a Q-TAG for your certificating learners this year. In pulling this support together, we have worked with other TVET Awarding Organisations to align, as far as possible, our guidance for alternative evidence. It is recognised, through the VCRF, that as Awarding Organisations have a diverse portfolio of qualifications, approaches to awarding may be different, and therefore you should seek guidance for other vocational qualifications from the relevant Awarding Organisation.

**This guidance will be kept updated and it will be version controlled, with changes made after initial publication, clearly signposted.**

### Confidence through common sources of evidence

To ensure that a Qualification-level Teacher Assessed Grade (Q-TAG) is sufficiently valid and reliable a centre should draw on a range of suitable evidence upon which to base it.

This should include a range of the following available assessment (and other) evidence that represents the breadth of underpinning knowledge, understanding and skills of the qualification, so learners can progress with confidence.

In setting out these sources of evidence, Pearson will classify these examples as 'common' meaning that all centres will be considering the same types of alternative evidence. We believe this list is extensive and covers the most likely available alternative evidence, but where other forms of evidence are identified, **we will review and update this list**, so please [contact us](#) or join one of our [events](#) if you are unsure.

***You should not provide a Qualification-level Teacher Assessed Grade where there is no evidence upon which to base one.***

### Established sources of evidence:

'Banked' marks and/or grades for completed assessments in Units to date. This includes internal assessments (quality assured by Pearson)

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### Common sources of alternative evidence:

- Alternative evidence that reflects a learner's performance which can be used to inform the Q-TAG:
  - This includes:
    - partially completed internal assessments
    - classwork or homework assignments or assessments
    - centre devised formative tests of knowledge
    - informal assessments
    - evidence from specialist teachers and other educational professionals such as special education needs coordinators (SENCOs) who have worked with the learner where appropriate.
    - project work
    - recordings (e.g. of practical performance)
    - evidence from work experience (where relevant to the qualification)
    - tracker of achievement and attainment over the course (provided this includes tangible evidence of achievement)
    - witness testimonies or teacher observation records when used in conjunction with other forms of evidence.

### Recording your Q-TAG decisions and Retention of Evidence and Data

Teachers and Heads of Department must maintain records that show how the Q-TAG process has operated, and this must include the rationale for decisions in relation to individual grades. You must maintain evidence across a variety of tasks to develop a holistic view of each learner's demonstrated knowledge, understanding and skills in the areas of content taught. By recording the various stages of the process, you should ensure accurate and secure retention of the evidence used to make decisions. The importance of robust processes for recording decisions and retention of evidence including data is essential in complying with data protection legislation and in anticipation of centre internal QA process, our review of the Q-TAGs submitted and potential appeals. **We will provide templates that can be used to record this evidence. We will include a link to this within this guidance as soon as it is finalised.**

As centres may be subject to Q-TAG evidence sampling it is important to make sure that the grades accurately reflect the evidence available. Evidence must be retained electronically or on paper in a secure centre-based system that can be readily shared with us.

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In line with usual practice, **centres must retain all evidence supporting their judgements for a minimum of 6 months after certificates are issued. However, if there is any complaint, malpractice or appeal in relation to the result then evidence will need to be kept longer as appropriate to the relevant policy.**

### Timelines

For those certificating in August, so that we can Quality Assure and process Q-TAGs before results day, centres have until the **18 June 2021** to submit their Q-TAGs to us. This means assessment evidence and alternative evidence on which to base a teacher judgement of the learner's performance needs to be available and internally reviewed by the relevant Lead IV, senior managers and Heads of Department by this date, in order to be considered for the grade put forward.

Results based on Q-TAGs submitted after this date may not be released on the advertised results date if Pearson's QA of the Q-TAGs submitted cannot take place because of a late submission.

### The use of 'Centre Assessment Grades' (CAGs) from 2020

All previously issued grades by Pearson stand, and can be used as part of the range of evidence from which centre's will use to determine a Q-TAG. However, it is important that the final holistic judgement of a learner's grade can be substantiated through evidence of actual learner performance.

### Determining the Q-TAG

#### How BTECs are usually awarded

As you will know, BTEC grades are usually awarded at unit level, where unit grades are determined by the achievement of unit criteria. The unit grades usually equate to a point score, which is then aggregated to a qualification grade. This grading information is set out in each specification. This means that learners can arrive at the same qualification grade, through different combinations of unit grades. Learners can perform differently on different units, for example they may excel at one internally assessed component but perform comparatively less well in terms of the unit grade on another internal unit. You need to reflect your consideration of differentiation in your assessment this year.

#### How BTECs will be awarded in August 2021

BTECs cannot be awarded in the normal way, due to the impact of the pandemic on the continuation of internal unit assessment.

Commented [MP34]: I feel we need something more definitive here for International customers.

Commented [MP35R34]: @Peacock, Sally @Rowan Letitia any views? This will impact the rest of doc too

Commented [PS36R34]: We should go with this and only have exceptions which Matt is identifying otherwise makes it very messy. we align with this where we can.

Commented [MP37]: @Peacock, Sally same for Int?

Commented [PS38R37]: no only for those that wish to certificate and uCAS

Commented [MP39]: not sure why this para is here

Commented [PS40R39]: needs keeping for centres to understand that not every unit would be distinction.

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Therefore, to determine a Q-TAG you will make a **holistic judgement based on the evidence you have of the learner's performance in the qualification**. The evidence you use to inform this judgement can be drawn from different sources of different types and can come from across the course of study. There is no type of evidence from those stated above that is preferred, but you might consider some pieces to be a fairer reflection of the learner's performance than others.

**Internal assessment for BTEC is important in supporting continued learning, as well as providing a good source of the evidence to inform holistic judgement of the Q-TAG awarded. Therefore, our policy is that internal assessment should continue where possible and could be used as evidence for the Q-TAG.**

However, we recognise that internal assessments may not have all been completed by learners, not least because of our original 'reduced assessment' mitigation. Therefore, we will award qualifications based on incomplete assessment evidence and will also work with centres to ensure sufficient evidence is used. The information below outlines what sufficient evidence means in this context.

**Review the specification grading information i.e. unit-level assessment criteria and grade descriptors with the subject teaching team**

You will be familiar with how your learners on programme have performed on different units and therefore how they arrived at the final aggregated qualification grade in normal years.

Therefore, we recommend the teaching team re-familiarises themselves with the unit criteria for internally assessed units, to get a sense of the learners' performance holistically to submit a final Q-TAG.

You will have undertaken centre assessor standardisation at the beginning of the year, using the relevant Centre Standardisation Materials. You should also now consider how alternative evidence (where the unit has not been assessed) could be used to evidence attainment, which can then contribute to the holistic judgement of the Qualification-level Teacher Assessed Grade.

*For reference: Assessment decisions for BTECs are based on the specific criteria given in each unit and set at each grade level. To ensure that standards are consistent in the qualification and across the suite, the criteria for each unit have been defined according to a framework. The way in which individual units are written provides a balance of assessment of understanding, practical skills, and vocational attributes appropriate to the purpose of qualifications.*

Commented [MP41]: I would delete all this as it repeats the above-and just say : Here is the process you need to go through to add your Q-Tag

Commented [OO42R41]: have you comments been added?

### Consider what evidence you will have from the content you have taught

You should only grade each learner on their **performance in the qualification content they have been taught**. You are not required to submit a Q-TAG based on learner potential.

With learners returning to centres, you will need to consider the coverage of content taught so far and map out any mandatory (and optional) content that has not yet been covered. It is important to continue to teach learners on their programmes of study to ensure that the most complete sources of evidence are available on which to base your holistic qualification grade judgement. If the pandemic has had an impact on delivery of practical units or those requiring specialist equipment, you may want to prioritise these units on return to standard teaching to ensure learners have best preparation for progression.

You should use your delivery and assessment plans to evaluate the situation for each learner. **We will also be providing a template to capture this information to support you in adhering to the policy of maintaining records of your judgements.**

By undertaking this review, the teaching team should consider any evidence gaps for individual learners. This step forms the underpinning standardisation of centre assessors who will be involved in the process of collating evidence, then determining the Q-TAG.

### 1. Collect the evidence

Consider what evidence you have collected across the course of the learners' performance. This can include anything from the common sources of evidence list above.

- You should include evidence that assesses the learner's ability across a representative range of subject content and across the different learning aims.
- There are no limitations on the number of pieces of evidence, or number of different types of evidence.
- If a learner has studied with other educational providers or a tutor during the course, you can also use any evidence that is available from those sources that you are confident is authentic. **[More guidance will be provided on this when it becomes available]**
- The evidence must relate to the qualification and specification being assessed.
- Witness testimonies accompanying partially completed work
- The evidence should illustrate the level performance at the grade being submitted for the Q-TAG

### 2. Evaluate the quality of the evidence

When considering how useful the evidence is in determining the grade you might consider the following factors:

- There is no set hierarchy of evidence and teachers should judge the evidence they believe to be the most representative of learners' achievements.
- Whether evidence covers content within learning aims
- Authenticity – The evidence should be the learner's own work. Where this includes group work, you must be confident about the learner's own contribution.
- Level of control – Was it taken in timed conditions? Was there an opportunity for redrafting? Was it supervised?
- Marking – How much support was available to help you in applying the mark scheme? What internal standardisation processes have been applied?
- More recent evidence may be more representative of learners' current performance; however, teachers will need to consider the context in which the work was created.
- Banked, externally validated evidence - It's important to consider whether a learner may have improved or not on the original banked grade (with evidence generated) for example in the case of external assessment where a resit opportunity has not been available.
- Also consider the context each piece was completed in. If you know that a learner completed an assessment when they were ill or in other challenging circumstances, you should consider whether it is a fair reflection of the performance – see below for more detail on special considerations.

### 3. Assign a Qualification-Level Teacher Assessed Grade (Q-TAG)

Q-TAGs should be based on a holistic judgement of the evidence of the learner's performance on the qualification content they have been taught at the point of the collection of evidence that will inform the Q-TAG. There is no set hierarchy of evidence and teachers should weight the evidence they believe to be the most representative of learners' achievements.

What would not be sufficient evidence?

- Where a learner has not been present for coverage of any of the course.

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- Where there is no evidence of any of the skills above, and it is not possible to generate any evidence.

Look at the evidence you have collected and use the sources of support available to help you reach a final grade. This will include your professional experience of the assessment materials used as well as the grade descriptors and exemplification available:

- **Unit criteria** – The [specification](#) should be referred to in understanding the unit-level requirements in normal times.
- **Centre Standardisation Materials** – Internal standardisation materials that have been used as part of your internal quality assurance process can be used to ensure that completed or partially completed assessment is assessed to the standards set out in the specification

Remember that the Q-TAG must be based on the learner's performance in the evidence you have collected. **You are not required to factor in the learner's potential.** For example, if all the evidence is of grade Pass and Merit, there would be no reason to consider awarding that learner a grade D (or D\*). It should be no easier or harder for a learner to achieve a grade based on their performance than in previous years.

### 4. Reflect on your judgement before submission

It is essential that holistic judgements are objective and in consideration of the evidence available. They should also be endorsed via an internal verification process by those on the teaching team, and senior managers (i.e. the Head of Department or Head of Centre). You should be mindful of policies and guidance regarding access and avoiding conscious or unconscious bias and discrimination in making awards.

[Guidance has been issued by Ofqual: Information for centres about making objective judgements.](#) You should review this guidance before putting forward any Q-TAG judgements.

The use of historical data which a centre has available is also one source of evidence which a centre may use to reflect on the grading decisions as a 'sense check'. **You can find more information on the use of data, below.**

**We have released 'performance indicators'** for every sector, covering the different qualification suites which we hope will support you with a holistic sense check of

Commented [PS43]: this needs complete re write as lots not applicable

Commented [RL44]: International Centres don't use OSCA. Could we refer to internal standardisation materials that have been used as part of the internal QA process? @Peacock, Sally @Myers, Phil

Commented [PS45R44]: yes perfect thanks Letitia

Commented [MP46R44]: @Rowan, Letitia thanks

Commented [MP47]: Do we have to reference across to Ofqual?

Commented [MP48R47]: @Peacock, Sally not sure it is necessary

Commented [PS49R47]: it's useful for the centres.

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your Q-TAGs before submission. Please use the relevant sector-specific guidance, available on our main [Q-TAG webpage](#) under 'Qualification-level sector performance indicators'. Please note: not all grades are covered within this guidance and centres are free to provide Q-TAGs from the whole range of grades available. For example, if a learner's performance is stronger than the indicators for grade D, you should consider awarding a grade D\*.

Commented [MP50]: This is internationalized so no probs

### **Making changes to Q-TAGs**

Considering these steps, Q-TAGs may then need to be adjusted as part of the centre's quality assurance processes.

## Using data to support the grading process for BTECs with a Qualification-level Teacher Assessed Grade (Q-TAG) in summer 2021

### **Introduction**

For a number of BTEC qualifications, centres will determine a qualification teacher assessed grade (Q-TAG) for their learners based on a range of evidence gathered from performance throughout the course of study.

Part of the internal quality assurance check that centres should complete is a high-level cross check of the QTAGs against results for previous cohorts. The guidance below is to support centres in how this may be completed.

The purpose of reviewing data on past performance is not to attempt to determine a learner's or a centre's outcomes this summer, but as one source of evidence from previous summer series (pre Covid-year), that can inform teachers' professional judgement on the level of attainment achieved by their learners.

Accordingly, centres are advised to consider the profile of their results in previous years (pre Covid years)\*. Centres can use this to undertake a high-level check once qualification grades have been assigned to learners, to ensure that they have applied a consistent standard in their assessment of the 2021 cohort compared to previous years in which assessments took place.

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Centres must ensure that grade judgements have been recorded for learners in the current assessments before considering historical records of mark data and grade distributions for learners in previous assessments at the centre.

New centres will not have any historical data, so will need to focus attention on other aspects of quality assurance or evidence from assessments in similar sectors set at comparable levels. If a centre has changed status, merged, or split in recent years, it will need to be taken into account when considering what data to collate.

*\*Further guidance on when it may be appropriate to use summer 2020 historical data (and its limitations) is provided below.*

### The use of data in reviewing overall centre outcomes

Centres should be aware of the distribution of qualification grades awarded to learners in previous summer series. However, grading judgements should not be driven by this data. Historical grade data should only be considered after grading judgements have been made.

Note some BTECs which require a Qualification Teacher Assessed Grade are roll-on/roll-off with steady numbers of certification throughout the year (rather than a peak in summer) or graded pass/fail only. Guidance on the use of historical data for these qualifications is given below.

### What data needs to be considered?

Centres are advised to compile information on the qualification grades awarded to learners in past summer series in which exams and standards verification of internal assessments took place (2018-2019), where they can be confident that a consistent standard was applied.

The usefulness of this information will depend on the following:

- The size of the centre's cohort from year to year – the larger the cohort, the more useful the data could be.
- The stability of the centre's overall grade outcomes from year to year – the more stable the outcomes are, the more confident the centre can be that variation would likely be low in 2021, had assessments taken place.
- The stability of the centre's outcomes will also depend on how long they have been delivering the qualification and if there have been any changes in the qualification structure which may have led to changes in how learners performed.

## Guidance for certificating and non-certificating learners

This information should be compiled for each sector at each level and for each centre as a whole (for example, all International Level 2 grades, or all L3 Nationals QCF grades), as it is important to consider both sector/qualification and centre level variation during the internal quality assurance review. It is likely that the size of the cohort and the stability of the outcomes will be higher for all sectors combined than for a single sector/qualification. Centres may also wish to bring together other data sources that may help quality assure the grades determined in 2021.

When aggregating outcomes across all sectors in a suite, centres should consider omitting qualifications that are no longer offered from the historical data, to provide a more valid comparison with the grades derived in 2021.

Looking at centre's qualification outcomes over the review years in which assessments took place (2018-2019), may be a good approach to benchmarking outcomes for 2021. This will help you to consider year-on-year fluctuations in outcomes. In instances where you have fewer years of historical data, however, this is still likely to be useful.

### Using historical data from summer 2020

Centres may wish to use summer 2020 data where there is no other year's historical data available for the qualification. However, they should note that the centre assessment grades used as a basis for final outcomes in summer 2020 were based on a different principle to that for the current series. In summer 2020, centres were asked to provide unit level grades that they considered the learner would most likely have achieved had assessments taken place. In 2021, grades must be based on the evidence produced by learners.

If centres wish to include summer 2020 data even where previous historical data is available, they should consider how 2020 outcomes relate to historical outcomes when assessments took place (2019-2018) before referring to them as part of the internal review.

### Comparing outcomes for International Level 3 BTEC

International Level 3 BTEC is a new qualification whose first award will be August 2021 for smaller sizes. Centres should consider prior graded evidence for years 2018/19 in consideration of comparability. However, centres should be mindful of the more integrated nature of assessment grids and therefore of evidence as this may have an impact on the standard of work produced.

### Internal quality assurance: using the data to inform the overall review of outcomes

After all grading decisions have been made, centres should review the aggregate grade distribution for each sector and suite (e.g., L3 Nationals (QCF), International Level 2). If outcomes are much higher than in previous years, or much lower, the reasons and evidence for it should be considered. Identify evidence for any recurring trends in the profile of performance at the centre over previous years, such as strong results for some sectors or specific learner groups. Comparisons should be contextualised with other information at centre level, for example data that suggests the cohort in a particular sector/qualification, or overall, is more or less able than in previous years – for example, tracking data, prior assessment data, or a change in the profile of your cohort.

Also consider the grades awarded to different groups of learners, including those with protected personal characteristics, as well as considering gender and disadvantage. Is each group's grade profile different from previous years, or compared with other groups? If so, why is that the case? Take particular care when assessing patterns of grades for small groups, where a single candidate may have a large effect.

It is advised that a centre makes a record of these comparisons and the rationale for any variations as part of the internal quality assurance process, in order that it can be discussed during any external quality assurance checks.

It is possible that, following this review, centres may need to reflect on the grading standard that your teachers have applied in one or more qualification/sector. Do not, however, apply any historical insights inconsistently to learners within a qualification or sector. If an issue is identified which cuts across several or most sectors, you may need to undertake a review across all sectors. **At all times, however, remember that it is the evidence of learners' work that must form the basis for each learner's qualification grade.** For example, the fact that no learner at your centre might have achieved a D\*D\*D\* in a L3 qualification or a Level 1 Pass in an International Level 2, in previous years is not a valid barrier to awarding these grades to a learner who has demonstrated attainment to that level.

Centres should give themselves sufficient time to collate the historical data and complete the review.

### Once the review is complete

If a centre is selected for a quality assurance visit, they may be asked to provide a statement explaining the rationale of the outcomes by qualification/sector and/or suite level. This must include details of how they compare in previous years in which assessments were sat, and an explanation for this – for example, if the centre's cohort were known to be particularly strong or weak relative to previous years; any changes at the centre that might have contributed to the level of attainment achieved by learners in particular sectors; or the size of the cohort means that comparisons between years are considered unreliable.

### The use of tracking data and predicted grades in reaching grading decisions

The JCQ grading guidance covers what assessment evidence can be used to inform the grading judgement for each learner. One source of data which is available to centres is tracking systems, that provide target grades or predicted grades based on assessment inputs and data modelling. As the policy direction is that the final grade is derived solely based on performances produced by learners, a grade derived based on a predicted trajectory or target grade is not permitted.

To illustrate this:

- If a learner is currently performing consistently at a grade M standard, they should be awarded a grade M.
- If a learner's tracking data shows improvement over the year, having produced grade P level work in the first half of the year, and grade M work thereafter, the learner should be awarded a grade M, even if a tracking system suggests that the candidate could potentially have achieved a grade D based on their trajectory.

### Use of data for qualifications which are pass and fail, or delivered more on demand (roll on/roll-off basis)

For these qualifications historical data may not be as reliable as an indicator. However, centres can consider the volume of learners that have been achieving a qualification historically (over last two years 2018-2019) and sense check to see if there are any unusually higher or lower and why that may be? When completing this check centres will need to consider the time period of the historical data used (particularly where qualifications are roll-on/roll-off) and its equivalence to the time period this year.

**Sector guidance for BTEC Level 3 and Level 4 Foundation Diplomas in Art and Design (2010) and BTEC Level 3 and Level 4 Foundation Diplomas in Art, Design and Media Practice (2020)**

For FAD (2010) and FADM (2020) qualifications, reduced assessment remains available and centres should continue to make every effort to assess and submit evidence for the External Examination process. Should students continue to be impacted by Covid-19 and are unable to complete assessment with reduction to assessment in place, you may submit [Q-TAGs](#) (Qualification-level Teacher Assessed Grades). In this circumstance, please contact your External Examiner and they will help you determine the most appropriate action. It is important that you contact your EE as soon as possible if you think you will need to submit Q-TAGs, as they have a submission deadline of 18th June 2021.

### An overview of the administrative steps you will take for certificating learners for August 2021

#### Preparing learner records

This year, as the focus is on Qualification-level grade information, you will need to ensure that learner records are up to date, as this information will populate learners into a list that we will provide to you (through EOL) to populate with your Q-TAGs. This means that learners must have an estimated completion date of between 1 June 2021 and 31 August 2021. Please check that all learners are registered onto the correct courses, as any late registration changes will trigger a review in line with our centre management processes.

#### Step 1 - Provide grades for completed internally assessed units

Learners may have several completed units at this stage and final grades for these should be submitted to us. Please enter these grades as you usually would, via Edexcel Online (EOL) and EDI, as soon as possible, and by 18 June 2021. This is to ensure learner records accurately reflect any internal assessment that has been able to take place.

#### Step 2 – Provide Flag in system for ‘reduced assessment’ (note this functionality is not yet available – but coming soon)

For any Reduced Internal Assessment (taught but not assessed, under the original ‘Reduced Assessment’ mitigation), you will ‘flag’ these in the grade reporting system in EOL, so this is accurately reflected in the system to indicate these units formed part of the learner’s programme of study. This is particularly important for learners will be ‘Topping-up’ to larger sized BTEC qualifications.

#### Step 3 – Collate and Evaluate all Assessment evidence and alternative evidence to make a Q-TAG judgement

Considering the content taught, the assessment evidence that is banked and the common sources of alternative evidence collected for each learner, the teaching team are now able to make a teacher judgement based on the level that the learner is performing at, reviewing the evidence, and discounting any evidence that might not be reflective of the learner’s true performance because of the circumstances that certain assessments were taken under.

Please see section 8 for more information on the process you should follow.

Commented [MP51]: Should we use UK one? I think poss not due to dates.

Commented [MP52R51]: @Peacock, Sally grateful of view

Commented [PS53R51]: Yes please use as they will have the same process in FAQs we need to put the extension date, but only for centres we have identified Matt is collating this list.

Commented [MP54]: check dates

Commented [MP55]: check dates

## Guidance for certificating and non-certificating learners

### **Step 4– Review and Approve**

The Head of Department/Lead Internal Verifier or other relevant senior leader should review and endorse the Q-TAGs for the subject area with the relevant teachers/assessors. After approval these should be passed to the Head of Centre.

Centres must keep their own records of approval for each subject area which may be requested by Pearson if required.

### **Step 5 - Submit Qualification-level Teacher Assessed Grades** *(note this functionality is not yet available – but coming soon).*

Please submit to us the Qualification-Level Teacher Assessed Grades by **18 June**. Submitting grades on time will enable us to contact you in good time should we need to query any of the grades put forward. Submitting grades after this date may mean you do not receive results by results day.

### **Step 6 – Submit the Head of Centre Declaration** *(note this functionality is not yet available – but coming soon).*

The Head of Centre Declaration will form part of the Q-TAG submission process this year. **We will give more guidance on this as soon as possible.**

### 8. Equalities and Objectivity

It is important that when forming any judgment on a Q-TAG for a learner a centre should consider any reasonable adjustment to mitigate any adverse impact of the Q-TAG process. We are committed to ensuring that all learners are treated fairly through these mitigating measures, and we acknowledge that centres will be best placed to accommodate this within their judgements.

#### Reasonable Adjustment and Special Consideration:

- **Reasonable adjustments** for disabled learners any access arrangements should have been in place when evidence was generated. Where they were not, centres should take that into account when coming to their judgement. Where appropriate, this should include input from appropriate specialist teachers and other professionals.

### 9. Bias and Objectivity

Centres will fulfil their duties and responsibilities in relation to relevant equality and disability legislation, guidance, and policies.

#### Senior Leaders should consider:

- Sources of unfairness and bias (situations/contexts, difficulty, presentation and format, language, conditions for assessment, marker pre-conceptions).
- Minimising bias (how to minimise bias in questions and marking, hidden forms of bias); and
- Bias in teacher assessed grades.

#### To avoid bias all staff involved in judgment of Qualification-level Teacher Assessed Grades will be aware that:

- Unconscious bias can skew judgements.
- The evidence should be valued for its own merit as an indication of performance and attainment.

## Guidance for certificating and non-certificating learners

- Teacher assessed grades should not be influenced by positive or challenging personal circumstances, character, behaviour, appearance, socio-economic background, or performance of their siblings.
- Unconscious bias is more likely to occur when quick opinions are formed.
- Having effective internal standardisation will help to ensure that there are different perspectives to the quality assurance process.

**We are working to provide a training module on bias which can be used to support teachers in making their judgements.**

### 10. Sharing Q-TAGs before results day

It will be important that centres are transparent about the overall approach that will be used to determine the qualification teacher assessed grades. Learners will want to understand the process and the information that will be considered.

**We can confirm that, in line with GQ guidance, centres should not disclose the Q-TAG judgement to learners in advance of results day. Learners should be made sufficiently aware of the evidence that will be used to make the holistic Q-TAG judgement.**

### 11. Consideration for Appeals

As in any year, we will ensure there is a clear route to appeal for each qualification suite. Where assessment has continued in the usual way (or with some adaptations) it is likely that the usual approach to appeals will be fit for purpose and can continue.

Where a Teacher Assessed Grade (TAG) has been used as the basis for awarding a vocational or technical qualification (VTQ) we will provide further details to clarify the arrangements for learners who wish to appeal their result.

We are currently developing our approach to appeals and considering how similar it should be across VTQs and GQs.

We anticipate the appeals process will utilise the evidence the centre used to make its Q-TAG decision for a learner. It will be important that all evidence on which a learner's Q-TAG has been based is retained safely by the centre. Centres should also

Commented [MP56]: I don't think this is necessary – particularly for RORO

Commented [MP57R56]: @Peacock, Sally grateful of your view on this as regards roll on roll off

Commented [PS58R56]: @Myers, Phil I think we need to keep to this in case of any changes by centres or us and also for any UCAS

## Guidance for certificating and non-certificating learners

retain any information relating to a learner's access arrangements, or personal circumstances affecting their performance, which has been considered during the process of determining their grade. Records of learner's evidence should be kept accessible in order that it can be easily drawn upon if they decide to appeal their grade.

We will provide more guidance on Appeals in the coming weeks.

### 12. Quality Assurance Activities in 2021

#### Introduction and overview

- BTEC assessment has always been underpinned by Quality Assurance processes, to support teacher-led assessment.
- As such, centres will continue to adhere to the existing BTEC policies, regarding centre-assessor standardisation and internal verification, but in the context of Q-TAGs. Our aim is that we can utilise these existing policies, to support the alternative processes this year. **Please also find the BTEC Centre Policy for Q-TAGs, below.**
- 'Common' sources of evidence will be set out by Pearson.
- Centres will refamiliarise and restandardise themselves on the qualification learning aims and external assessment grade descriptors, establishing a shared understanding of the holistic requirements of the course and how existing evidence can be used to inform the holistic Q-TAG judgement, and where alternative evidence may be needed to support the judgements.
- Much of the evidence that will be used to inform the Q-TAG will be based on completed, or partially completed internal assessments.
- Where units are completed or partially completed, Standards Verifiers will give feedback on unit-level standards application, which we believe will support centres when they go on to make their Qualification-level TAG judgements.
- Centre assessors should take note of any feedback provided and share with the teaching team. They may deem it appropriate to restandardise.
- After Q-TAG submission, a final QA check will take place by Pearson – centres may be required to review Q-TAGs if evidence cannot be provided to support grades put forward.
- **Please ensure that the evidence which is used to support the Qualification-Level Teacher Assessed Grade is retained until 6 months after the date of the issue of the result, or the conclusion of any appeal in relation to that result, whichever is later.**

#### Centre policies to include the Q-TAG process

As you will be aware, centres are required to sign up to a range of centre policies in relation to the operation of Quality Assurance in more normal times. Our aim is that we can utilise these existing policies, to support the alternative processes this year.

## Guidance for certificating and non-certificating learners

We have recognised the need for an overarching centre policy that should support the BTEC Q-TAG process this year, which you can find below and in Appendix B. You will be asked to confirm your adherence to this policy at the point of Q-TAG submission and Head of Centre Declaration. It is therefore essential that you ensure all centre staff involved in the process are aware of this policy and have access to this guidance.

### Centre Policy for Q-TAGs

**All centres will be required to confirm their adherence to this policy via the Q-TAG submission and Head of Centre Declaration process this year. It is essential you follow this document and steps outlined below, and existing BTEC policies for Quality Assurance.**

Aims of this Policy:

1. To make it clear the steps all centres must take to ensure that the Q-TAGs they determine for their learners are sufficiently valid and reliable a centre must:
  - Review the specification grading information i.e.. unit-level assessment criteria and grade descriptors with the subject teaching team
  - Consider what evidence you will have from the content you have taught
  - Collect the evidence
  - Evaluate the quality of the evidence
  - Assign a Qualification-Level Teacher Assessed Grade (Q-TAG)
  - Reflect on your judgement before submission

**Further detail in relation to the above steps must be referred to and is available in this document, with supporting information on our webpage:**

[quals.pearson.com/BTEC2021assessment](https://quals.pearson.com/BTEC2021assessment)

2. To ensure that learners can feel confident in the process their centres have taken to determine their Q-TAG.
3. To summarise the existing BTEC policies, and confirm that they now also apply in the context of Q-TAG judgements.
4. To reflect and incorporate Guidance that any Q-TAG is based on appropriate sources of evidence and has gone through an internal quality assurance process (which includes final sense check of outcomes against historical centre outcomes).
5. To ensure that the methodology used to determine the Q-TAG is consistent across centres and sufficiently valid, reliable and does not advantage or disadvantage any group of, or individual, learners.

In order to do this the centre will, for each qualification and learner, submit a Q-TAG and Head of Centre Declaration confirming that they have:

1. Ensured that all relevant teaching staff (i.e. Assessors, Internal Verifiers, Heads of Department and Heads of Centre) will use the guidance provided by Pearson to

Commented [MP59]: Is this still relevant?

Commented [MP60R59]: @Peacock, Sally does this work for Int?

Commented [PS61R59]: do we have a international equivalent page set up by marketing?

Commented [MP62R59]: @Peacock, Sally do we need a separate International one or should we add Int guidance to this UK one?

## Guidance for certificating and non-certificating learners

confirm the Q-TAG, and refer to supplementary guidance from JCQ and Ofqual where required.

2. Ensured that the evidence that has been used for each Q-TAG judgement is sufficiently documented to ensure that it can be explained to the learner or Parent or Carer in the case of Appeals, and to Pearson. Centres must take into account previous years' results, **if there is a material difference in the results profile expected in 2021, a Centre must be able to explain why its results are significantly out of line with past performance** (be that higher or lower).
3. Ensured that all assessment evidence is retained (evidence which is used to support the Qualification-Level Teacher Assessed Grade should be retained until 6 months after the date of the issue of the result, or the conclusion of any appeal in relation to that result, whichever is later). In some cases, evidence may no longer be available, JCQ has released guidance on [the retention of evidence](#) in these circumstances. Evidence must be made available for the purposes of further external quality assurance or an Appeal. This will include documentation that demonstrates the above process for the Q-TAG judgement has been followed, i.e.:
  - Records of Standardisation of Assessors and Internal Verifiers and other relevant members of staff, in relation to the Q-TAG process and holistic judgements
  - Evidence sheets for learners (Existing BTEC templates for actual assessment and Pearson will provide a template for documenting alternative evidence)
  - The alternative sources of evidence that have been considered
  - Any additional Assessment and Internal Verification materials
  - Any assessed learner work assessment records
  - Records of performance data used for sense check, with explanation for any deviation in the 2021 Q-TAG judgements (if there is a material difference in the profiles expected in 2021).
4. Ensured they follow all other policies as set out in our Pearson Annual Centre Declaration signed in 2021, including Pearson Terms and Conditions. You can find more information on our Quality Assurance [webpages](#)

This includes:

- Equality and Diversity
- Safeguarding
- Health and Safety (including any arrangements for employer Involvement)
- Special Consideration and Reasonable Adjustment
- Recognition of Prior Learning
- Registration and Certification of Learners
- Assessment
- Internal verification
- Plagiarism and Assessment Malpractice
- Appeals & Complaints

### What will Standards Verification involve this year?

The Standards Verification process **this year has a different core purpose and is designed to support centres** and assessors in awarding grades. It will offer guidance, support, and areas where processes can be developed to shape parity across centres.

BTEC is made up of internal assessment, because of this, and in parallel to producing some more specific guidance around arriving at Q-TAG grades we have taken the decision to turn our standards verification process into a clear touch point to support you through the process.

We have therefore reduced the amount of material that we would like to review, and have introduced some flexibility of what that evidence looks like (could include partially completed work). It will enable us to have an earlier interaction with you on assessment judgements that you are making on a subset of the qualification to have some confidence that you are likely to be making good judgements at the point of Q-TAG submission. We intend to use the outputs of this process to inform, in part, the sampling of Q-TAGs later in the year (July).

- The process for BTEC quality assurance is well established and our approach will be to continue working with you collaboratively to support this requirement.
- To fulfil the requirements on quality assurance, Standards Verification will continue in a different format and with a different core purpose this year - to support the Q-TAG process.

#### - What will Standards Verifiers (SVs) be able to do?

- SVs will be providing feedback on teacher unit-level assessment only.
- This feedback can be used to support centres to ascertain their accuracy in the application of unit-level criteria.
- SVs can provide both sector specific expertise relating to internal assessment, and support for centres on the application of unit-level standards.
- SVs will not be advising centres on their Qualification-level Teacher Assessed Grades, as these judgements will have to consider other forms of evidence.

#### Other ways in which your Standards Verifier (SV) can support you:

- Discuss any reduced assessment options and possible adaptations available for the programme

Commented [MP63]: @Peacock, Sally I think this all pertains?

Commented [PS64R63]: @Rowan, Letitia - yes standard SV

Commented [PS65R63]: @Rowan, Letitia - does it make sense to you?

Commented [RL66R63]: @Myers, Phil @Peacock, Sally Yes absolutely. We have only trained/standardised SVs on Assessment decisions based on unit criteria and could end up in muddy water if we ask them to look at TAG evidence

## Guidance for certificating and non-certificating learners

- Review assessment plans
- Share good practice in delivery and assessment activities
- Offer advice on alternative resources and approaches to content delivery
- Suggest alternative approaches when gathering assessment evidence
- Provide feedback on assignment briefs, assessment decisions and internal verification

### Final Pearson QA of Q-TAGs submitted

The timelines for the post-submission Q-TAG QA will be aligned with General Qualifications and will run from 18 June through to 16 July. In exceptional circumstances this may run until 24 July 2021.

This final stage of the quality assurance process is to confirm that centres have implemented the policies set out by Pearson for the Q-TAG and that their submitted grades reflect this. The sampling process will provide confidence that the grades awarded by Pearson command assurance.

The sampling process will take place following the submission of grades by centres. Targeted sampling will be informed by a range of factors including:

• Where a centre's overall results profile for this year's cohort appears to diverge significantly compared to the profiles for cohorts from previous years (when exams have taken place);

• The Standards Verification activity from this year

In addition, random sampling will ensure appropriate sector/qualification, geographical and 'centre-type' coverage.

Sampling after the submission of grades will involve a review of evidence at qualification and sector level by subject specialists. The sampling process will help ensure that centres have implemented the Pearson guidance and the internal quality assurance for determination of grades were followed, without placing an unreasonable administrative burden on the centre being sampled. Pearson will decide whether to accept the grades submitted by centres or undertake further review. This may lead to the withholding of results.

Centres are expected to work with Pearson during the quality assurance process. Failure to engage may jeopardise the timely issue of results to learners, and may lead to undertaking further investigation (see Malpractice section)

Commented [MP67]: Relevant for Int?

Commented [MP68R67]: @Peacock, Sally grateful of your view on this

## Guidance for certificating and non-certificating learners

### Malpractice

Pearson greatly appreciates all of the hard work that centres will undertake in setting out and implementing their processes to determine grades. Centres are required to submit grades that have been determined in line with published guidance and their own Centre Policy.

The decision to not go ahead with standard assessment in Summer 2021 means that the causes and drivers for malpractice will be different to those in a normal examination series. However, malpractice can still occur through genuine error or intent, particularly around the determination of grades. A minority of centre staff may fail to appropriately adhere to the guidance in determining grades and some students might attempt to gain an unfair advantage.

To support centres in these challenging times we have set out below some of the circumstances in which Pearson will investigate potential malpractice concerns. Please note that the list is not intended to be exhaustive and there may be other instances of potential malpractice which will require investigation.

### Centres/centre staff

Pearson's Investigations team will investigate credible allegations of malpractice or issues reported from our monitoring processes that raise concerns about a failure to follow the published requirements for determining grades. Examples include:

- Registrations are made for learners who had not studied the course of entry or had not intended to certificate in summer 2021.
- Grades created for learners who have not been taught sufficient content to provide the basis for that grade.
- A teacher deliberately and inappropriately disregarding the centre's published policy when determining grades.
- A teacher fabricating evidence of learner performance to support an inflated grade.
- A teacher deliberately providing inappropriate levels of support before or during an assessment, including deliberate disclosure of mark schemes and assessment materials, to support an inflated grade.
- A teacher intentionally submitting inflated grades.
- A failure to retain evidence used in the determination of grades in accordance with the Pearson grading guidance.
- A systemic failure to follow the centre's policy in relation to the application of Reasonable Adjustments, Access Arrangements or Special Consideration arrangements for learners in relation to assessments used to determine grades.
- A failure to take reasonable steps to authenticate learner work.
- A failure to appropriately manage Conflicts of Interest (COIs) within a centre.
- A Head of Centre's failure to submit the required declaration when submitting their grades.
- Grades being released to learners (or their parents/carers) before the issue of results.

## Guidance for certificating and non-certificating learners

- Failure to cooperate with Pearson's quality assurance, appeal or investigation processes.
- Failure to conduct a centre review or submit an appeal when requested to do so by a student.

Centres which identify such incidents should report them to our Investigations team by completing a JCQ M2 form (<https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/malpractice/>) and submitting this and any relevant evidence to [pqsmalpractice@pearson.com](mailto:pqsmalpractice@pearson.com).

### Learners

It is possible that some learners may attempt to influence their teachers' judgements about their grades.

Learners might attempt to gain an unfair advantage during the centre's process by, for example, submitting fabricated evidence or plagiarised work. Such incidents would constitute malpractice and centres are asked to report these to Pearson in the normal way using the JCQ M1 form (<https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/malpractice/>) and emailing this and supporting information to [candidatemalpractice@pearson.com](mailto:candidatemalpractice@pearson.com).

Learners, or individuals acting on their behalf such as parents/carers, might also try to influence grade decisions by applying pressure to centres or their staff. We anticipate that the majority of such instances will be dealt with by the centre internally – in such cases, we ask that the centres retain clear and reliable records of the circumstances and the steps taken, and that learners are made aware of the outcome. However, if a learner continues to inappropriately attempt to pressure centre staff then please inform the candidate malpractice investigations team using the JCQ M1 Form. We will contact your centre if we receive credible allegations that such pressure has been applied in order that appropriate steps can be taken.

In all the scenarios listed above, as well as any others that have not been explicitly identified here, the *JCQ Suspected Malpractice Policies and Procedures 2020-2021* ([https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Malpractice\\_20-21\\_v2-1.pdf](https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Malpractice_20-21_v2-1.pdf)) continues to apply. Please be aware that, as always, all investigations into alleged malpractice remain confidential and the findings, including any sanctions imposed, are not publicly disclosed.

Should you have any questions or concerns regarding malpractice, please contact the Investigations team via [pqsmalpractice@pearson.com](mailto:pqsmalpractice@pearson.com).

## 13. An overview of the administrative steps you will take for 'mid-flight' learners

A non-certificating ('mid-flight') learner, is a learner part way through a course (i.e. in year 1 of a 2-year course).

*Note: If your centre uses a "top -up" model (i.e. registering learners on a smaller course, and then 'topping-up' to a larger sized qualification on completion of the smaller sized course) you must follow the guidance in the previous sections for certificating learners.*

**Mid-flight learners must not be given a Q-TAG in 2021.**

### Arrangements for mid-flight learners

We recognise and anticipate that mid-flight learners due to certificate next year (2022) will have been impacted by a different level of disruption than those completing this year. We also understand that learners and centres are keen to know unit level results to make decisions, but as we do not yet know what the situation we will be next year, our decision is to ensure that we do the right thing by learners and take the time to review the situation next academic year, and take the impact into account at the point of certification for these learners.

In light of this we can confirm that we will request Qualification-level or Unit-level Teacher Assessed Grades for mid-flight learners, **at the appropriate point of certification** next academic year. We anticipate that this will be in January 2022 for March completers, and June 2022, for summer completers. Further detail will be confirmed closer to the time.

TAGs will only be permitted for those learners where there are 'reduced assessment' flags in place this academic year (applicable between 30 August 2020 and 31 August 2021, in line with the eligibility window for the VCRF).

All other assessments for the relevant qualification will need to be taught and assessed, and evidence retained, so that it can be quality assured, and used to inform the TAG.

Learners that enrol onto BTEC courses from September 2021 will be expected to complete all of the relevant assessment.

Commented [PS69]: we have June 2022 only as no external so remove all external comments. I know we HK but don't see why we would extend or we have an exceptional case as they should be back to normal

Commented [MP70]: Question re 1/9/2021 to 31/12/2021

Commented [MP71R70]: @Peacock, Sally this has come up in FAQs also

Commented [PS72R70]: we should just remove the external quote.

## Guidance for certificating and non-certificating learners

Key points to note:

- Ensure registrations for mid-flight learners have the appropriate 2022 completion dates.
- Exam Entries (where relevant) should be put forward where an external assessment was due to take place. This is to ensure that the learners record reflects whether the learner has been taught the content, and was due to be assessed on this content in summer. Please note that unit-level results will not be issued in 2021.
- Existing [published 'reduced internal assessment' mitigations](#) continue to be in place. You will be to notify us of those units via a 'flag' in our system (The letter 'Z'). It is important this is accurately reflected in the system to indicate these units formed part of the learner's programme of study. You should notify us of these units during this academic year and **no later than 31 August 2021**.
- We acknowledge mid-flight learners may have several completed units at this stage. Those final unit grades for internal assessment that has been completed, either in line with 'in-unit' adaptations, or with guidance in the specification, should be submitted in the normal way this year, using the 'interim' claim function.
- Where possible, teaching, learning and assessment should continue, please following the subject specific teaching and learning guidance on the teaching and learning page.
- Please retain relevant evidence for these learners until certification point. We will provide further information on quality assurance steps when we are able to.

Commented [MP73]: Need to review for ROROs after 31<sup>st</sup> Aug

Commented [PS74R73]: we need to be careful as ROR if starting now should be fine with no assessment so would need to be case by case.

## Appendix A - Glossary of Terms

VTQ	Vocational and Technical Qualifications
AO	Awarding Organisation
Q-TAG	Qualification-level Teacher Assessed Grade
VCRF	VTQ Contingency Regulatory Framework
EOL	Edexcel Online
JCQ	Joint Council for Qualifications

### Appendix B – Centre Policy for Q-TAGs

Commented [PS75]: this needs to be kept.

**All centres will be required to confirm their adherence to this policy via the Q-TAG submission and Head of Centre Declaration process this year. It is essential you follow the [guidance](#) and steps outlined below, and existing BTEC policies for Quality Assurance.**

Aims of this Policy:

6. To make it clear the steps all centres must take to ensure that the Q-TAGs they determine for their learners are sufficiently valid and reliable a centre must:
  - Review the specification grading information ie. unit-level assessment criteria and grade descriptors with the subject teaching team
  - Consider what evidence you will have from the content you have taught
  - Collect the evidence
  - Evaluate the quality of the evidence
  - Assign a Qualification-Level Teacher Assessed Grade (Q-TAG)
  - Reflect on your judgement before submission

**Further detail in relation to the above steps must be referred to and is available in our guidance, [here](#), with supporting information on our webpage: [quals.pearson.com/BTEC2021assessment](https://quals.pearson.com/BTEC2021assessment)**

7. To ensure that learners can feel confident in the process their centres have taken to determine their Q-TAG.
8. To summarise the existing BTEC policies, and confirm that they now also apply in the context of Q-TAG judgements.
9. To reflect and incorporate Ofqual's Vocational Contingency Regulatory Framework (VCRF) and Guidance that any Q-TAG is based on appropriate sources of evidence and has gone through an internal quality assurance process (which includes final sense check of outcomes against historical centre outcomes).
10. To ensure that the methodology used to determine the Q-TAG is consistent across centres and sufficiently valid, reliable and does not advantage or disadvantage any group of, or individual, learners.

In order to do this the centre will, for each qualification and learner, submit a Q-TAG and Head of Centre Declaration confirming that they have:

5. Ensured that all relevant teaching staff (i.e. Assessors, Internal Verifiers, Heads of Department and Heads of Centre) will use the guidance provided by Pearson to confirm the Q-TAG, and refer to supplementary guidance from JCQ and Ofqual where required.
6. Ensured that the evidence that has been used for each Q-TAG judgement is sufficiently documented to ensure that it can be explained to the learner or Parent or Carer in the case of Appeals, and to Pearson. Centres must take into account previous years' results, **if there is a material difference in the results profile expected in 2021, a Centre**

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**must be able to explain why its results are significantly out of line with past performance** (be that higher or lower).

7. Ensured that all assessment evidence is retained in line with Ofqual's Vocational Contingency Regulatory Framework (evidence which is used to support the Qualification-Level Teacher Assessed Grade should be retained until 6 months after the date of the issue of the result, or the conclusion of any appeal in relation to that result, whichever is later). In some cases, evidence may no longer be available, JCQ has released guidance on [the retention of evidence](#) in these circumstances. Evidence must be made available for the purposes of further external quality assurance or an Appeal. This will include documentation that demonstrates the above process for the Q-TAG judgement has been followed, i.e.:
  - Records of Standardisation of Assessors and Internal Verifiers and other relevant members of staff, in relation to the Q-TAG process and holistic judgements
  - Evidence sheets for learners (Existing BTEC templates for actual assessment and Pearson will provide a template for documenting alternative evidence)
  - The alternative sources of evidence that have been considered
  - Any additional Assessment and Internal Verification materials
  - Any assessed learner work assessment records
  - Records of performance data used for sense check, with explanation for any deviation in the 2021 Q-TAG judgements (if there is a material difference in the profiles expected in 2021).
8. Ensured they follow all other policies as set out in our Pearson Annual Centre Declaration signed in 2021, including Pearson Terms and Conditions. You can find more information on our Quality Assurance [webpages](#)

This includes:

- Equality and Diversity
- Safeguarding
- Health and Safety (including any arrangements for employer Involvement)
- Special Consideration and Reasonable Adjustment
- Recognition of Prior Learning
- Registration and Certification of Learners
- Assessment
- Internal verification
- Plagiarism and Assessment Malpractice
- Appeals & Complaints

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Print: \_\_\_\_\_ Dated: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Head of Centre**

## Guidance for certificating and non-certificating learners