

BTEC qualifications

# Awarding Results in 2021

Guidance for certificating  
and non-certificating  
learners.

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This guidance will be kept updated and it will be version controlled, with changes made subsequent to initial publication, clearly highlighted in yellow.

## 1. Introduction

On the 25<sup>th</sup> February, the DfE and Ofqual announced their arrangements for issuing results this year for Ofqual-regulated Vocational and Technical Qualifications, in response to the cancellation of external assessments due to take place this year. At that time [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.

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, and this document sets out initial guidance on the process teachers and centres will need to follow to submit these Q-TAGs to Pearson, by the deadline of 18<sup>th</sup> June 2021, in order for learners expecting to complete their BTEC this summer to 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 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 kept 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.

Pearson has been working closely with Ofqual, DfE, other Awarding Organisations and regulators, to ensure that we can enable learners to receive their results and progress with confidence this year. In doing so, we have observed the new regulatory guidance, whilst being mindful to make the process as simple as possible and give you guidance as soon as possible.

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  
BTEC and Apprenticeships

## Summary

We have worked very closely with the DfE, Ofqual, and many of you, 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.

We welcome the approach set out by DfE and Ofqual, which looks to both **recognise** the varied purpose and range of vocational qualifications and progression routes, and the **need** to ensure certificating learners can be awarded grades in order to progress, with parity, alongside those receiving results for General Qualifications this year.

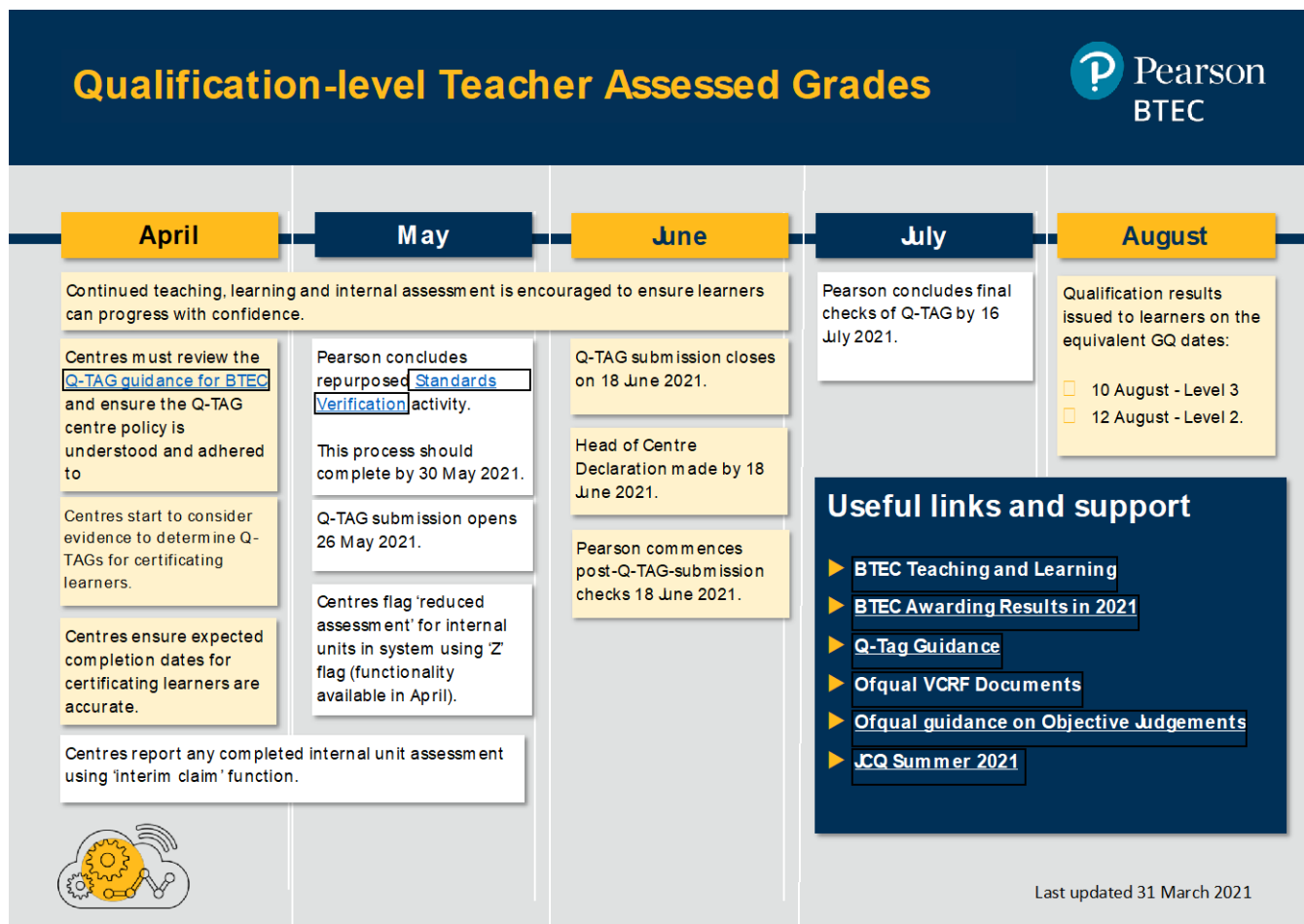
In setting the approach, Ofqual has introduced a new regulatory framework, called the [VTQ Contingency Regulatory Framework \(VCRF\)](#). The VCRF permits Awarding Organisations to issue results on the basis of alternative evidence including teachers' judgements of learners' performance when exams do not take place and/or when learners cannot complete all internal assessment.

A summary of decisions of the consultation are listed below and what this means for BTECs that are most similar to GCSEs and A Levels 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, the DfE recognises 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 VTQs and other general qualifications should be **broadly the same as in previous years**.
- Learners taking VTQs and other general qualifications that are not GCSEs or A levels but are used to progress to HE or FE should receive their results no later than their GCSE or A Level peers, **VTQ results will issued to learners on or before 10 August for level 3 and 12 August for level 2**.

# Guidance for certificating and non-certificating learners

## Timeline for the Q-TAG process for certificating learners



You can find an online version of our timeline, [here](#).

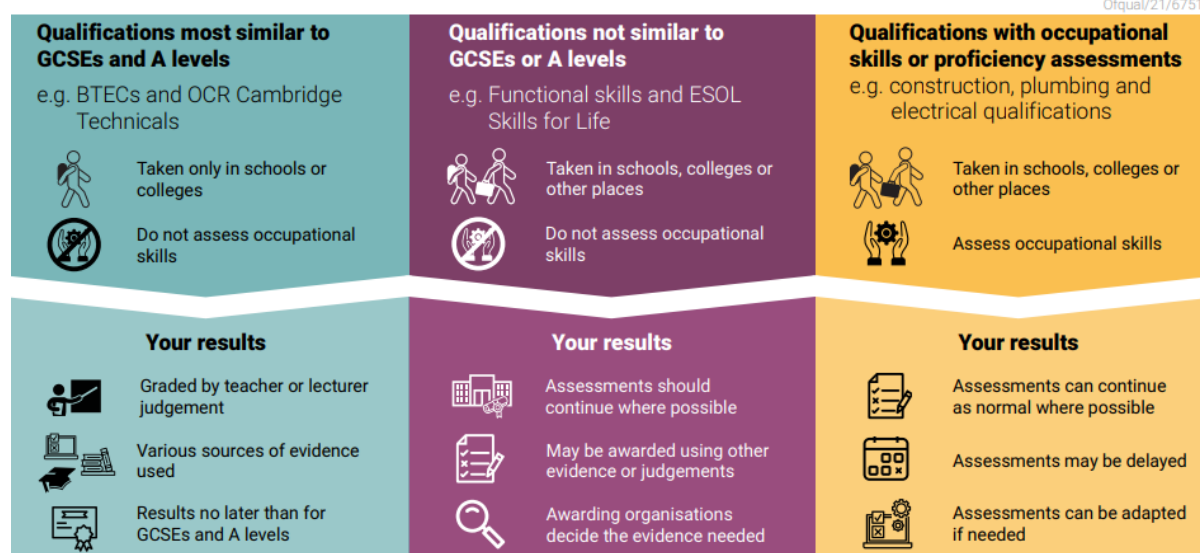
## 2. Categorisation of Pearson's BTEC Qualifications

Due to the diverse nature of Vocational and Technical Qualifications (VTQs), the Department for Education (DfE) has set out that Awarding Organisations must categorise (similar to the categorisation process of 2020) qualifications that can be permitted to be awarded based on teachers' judgements of learner performance based on a range of evidence.

### How vocational and technical qualifications will be awarded in 2021

ofqual

Ofqual/21/6751/1



You can find an online version of this, [here](#).

For qualifications that give a Licence to Practise, but where learners also use these qualifications to progress, components of the qualification that are linked to the licence will need to be completed, and the relevant Pearson QA processes completed. You can find out more in [Section 9](#).



### 3. Arrangements for awarding results in 2021

#### Terminology

Ofqual have advised Awarding Organisations that a grade issued based on the judgement of teachers, based on various sources of evidence, should be referred to as a 'Teacher Assessed Grade' (TAG), for both General and 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.

The VTQ Contingency Regulatory Framework (VCRF), applies to certificating and non-certificating ('mid-flight') learners. However, for BTEC, there will be different activities for centres to complete depending on when the learner is due to certificate.

#### 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 the DfE have 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 are eligible for the relevant arrangements.

**For non-certificating learners ('mid-flight' learners) the Q-TAG process cannot be used. Instead, the 'reduced assessment' mitigation continues. Exam entries for assessment that was due to take place should be made. See [Section 16](#) for more information on mid-flight 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, Awarding Organisations are required to 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 are in [Section 15](#).

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 Annex B](#), and must be adhered to when your centre commences determining the holistic Q-TAG for learners. You will be required to 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
- [Teaching support](#) – support for the continuation of teaching and assessment
- [Contact us](#)
- [FAQs](#)
- [Events](#) - filter for the appropriate event in the Qualification drop-down
  
- [Ofqual VCRF](#)
- [Ofqual infographic](#)
- [Ofqual guidance on Making Objective Judgements](#)
- [Ofqual Explainer Tool](#)
  
- [JCQ guidance](#)



## 4. 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\*\*  
BTEC Level 1/2 Firsts  
BTEC Level 1/2 Tech Awards  
BTEC Level 2 Technicals, Industry Skills  
BTEC 2010 Level 3 Nationals, Level 2, Level 1 and Entry Level  
BTEC Level 3 Nationals RQF (from 2016)  
BTEC Level 3 Technicals  
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.

\*\*For qualifications that are categorised as 'B2', all content must be taught and learners can only be issued with a Q-TAG as a last resort. Find out more, [here](#).

## 5. Qualifications not covered in this guidance

We will be releasing separate guidance that will cover:

- BTEC Qualifications accredited by SQA
- BTEC Qualifications Level 4-7 (including [Higher Nationals](#))
- BTEC Qualifications operating internationally
- Level 1-7 SRF programmes and SRF Higher Nationals
- [Functional Skills and ESOL](#)
- [T Levels](#)

## 6. Categorising BTEC Qualifications

BTEC qualifications have been put into three main categories, which determines the approach that can be taken to award results this year under the VCRF. This guidance covers those qualifications where a Q-TAG is permitted (for certificating learners).

A full list of Pearson's BTEC Qualifications can be [found here](#), detailing which category each qualification is in and whether a Q-TAG can be put forward. Q-TAGs are available to qualifications categorised as 'B1'. For qualifications categorised as 'B2', Q-TAGs are only permitted as a last resort.

Please note, in all cases, Q-TAGs can only be put forward for certificating learners that have sufficient evidence upon which to base one.

	Ofqual Category		
	B1 – Most similar to GQs	B2 – Not similar to GQs	A – Assess occupational skills
Learners certificating in 2021	<p>Teaching, Learning and Internal Assessment can continue.</p> <p>Q-TAG will be submitted to Pearson by centre, using a range of sources of evidence</p>	<p>Teaching, Learning and Internal Assessment can continue.</p> <p>External Assessment should continue where possible</p> <p>All content must be taught.</p> <p>Q-TAGs may be permitted in some circumstances</p>	<p>Assessment can continue and be adapted if needed, or Assessment may need to be delayed.</p>
Non-certificating Learners (mid-flight learners certificating after 2021)	<p>Teaching, Learning and Internal Assessment can continue.</p> <p><a href="#">See section 16</a></p>	<p>Teaching, Learning and Internal Assessment can continue.</p> <p>External Assessment should continue where possible</p> <p><a href="#">See section 16</a></p>	<p>Assessment can continue and be adapted if needed, or Assessment may need to be delayed.</p>

# 7. Arrangements for awarding results

## In-scope BTEC qualifications

For BTEC qualifications that are in-scope of the alternative awarding process, we will be requesting a holistic judgement, based on evidence from content taught, this will be called a **Qualification-level Teacher Assessed Grade** (Q-TAG). This will enable qualification results to be issued for learners completing these qualifications this year.

## Unit-level information for certificating learners

If unit-level internal assessment has been completed, **you should 'bank' these internal assessments**. 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, centres will need to make **a holistic judgement, based on the available evidence**. This means centres will make judgements on the basis of 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 on the basis of 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 8](#).

### 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 [sector-specific teaching and learning support](#), accommodating social distancing and adapting to remote delivery. Late last year we announced the '[reduced assessment](#)' mitigation, which intended to further support the continuation of teaching and learning, by creating time.

In light of 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 or external assessment, the evidence used should be derived from actual learner work from taught course content, as opposed to 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 assessment, including incomplete internal assessments as well as exams.

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
- be a reflection of the grade the learner is performing at
- Be agreed by the Head of Centre before submission

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- Be easily explained, through the quality of the evidence used and how the evidence has been gathered to arrive at the final grade, to the learner, should they 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.

# 8. Qualification-Level Teacher Assessed Grade 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 VTQ Awarding Organisations to align, as far as possible, our guidance for alternative evidence. It is recognised, through the VCRF, that as VTQ Awarding Organisations have a diverse portfolio of qualifications, approaches to awarding may be different, and therefore you should seek guidance for other VTQs from the relevant Awarding Organisation.

## 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 intends to 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 intend to review and update this list**, so please [contact us](#) or join one of our [events](#) if you are unsure. This is referred to by some Awarding Organisations as the 'basket of evidence'.

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



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Established sources of evidence:

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

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
    - Mock examinations (based on past papers, or centre-devised tests)
    - 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 (this cannot be used in isolation, as by itself it would not be sufficient evidence)
    - 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

It is fundamental that teachers and Heads of Department maintain records that show how the Q-TAG process has operated, including the rationale for decisions in relation to individual grades. Evidence should be maintained 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. Recording the various stages of the process 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

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data protection legislation and in anticipation of centre internal QA process, our review of the Q-TAGs submitted and potential appeals. **You should supplement your existing tracking and documentation of internal assessment records, with a Q-TAG alternative evidence record. Guidance and links to a template can be found [here](#).**

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.

**In line with Ofqual's VCRF, please ensure that the evidence which is used to support a Teacher Assessed Grade is retained until 6 months after the date of the issue of the result, or the conclusion of any complaint, malpractice investigation or appeal in relation to that result, whichever is later.**

### Timelines

In order for us to 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.

### January 2021 External Assessments

The DfE stated that January 2021 external exams and other assessments for VTQs could continue where schools, colleges and other FE providers judged it right to do so. Some learners may not, however, have been able to sit these exams and assessments as planned, or because of the situation, did not feel that the results of the assessment (released 17 March) were a fair representation of the learner's capability due to the circumstances under which they went ahead. Therefore, Ofqual have advised that the results of the assessment do not need to form part of the Qualification-level Teacher Assessed Grade decision where a centre has evidence to support that it is not reflective a learner's performance.

## 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 points 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 or an external component.

### How BTECs will be awarded in 2021

BTECs cannot be awarded in the normal way, as DfE has set out that not all unit assessment can be completed, due to cancelation of exams and the impact of the pandemic on the continuation of internal unit assessment.

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, the government's policy is that internal assessment should continue where possible and could be used as evidence for the Q-TAG.**

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However, we recognise that not all internal assessments may have been completed by all learners, not least because of our original 'reduced assessment' mitigation. Ofqual's VCRF permits Awarding Organisations (AOs) to award qualifications on the basis of incomplete assessment evidence and AOs will also work with centres to ensure sufficient evidence is used. The information below outlines what sufficient evidence means in this context. You can find an overview of the Q-TAG process [here](#) and a short video [here](#).

## 1. Review the specification grading information ie. unit-level assessment criteria and grade descriptors with the subject teaching team

You are likely to 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.

In light of this, we recommend the teaching team re-familiarises themselves with the unit criteria for internally assessed units, and (where the qualification includes external assessment) the grade descriptors for the external assessments to get a sense of the learners' performance holistically in order 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 the grade descriptors of the externally assessed units where external assessment is part of the qualification, and how alternative evidence (where the unit has not been sat, or a resit was intended) 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 as a whole, 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.*

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

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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 on the basis of 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. Continuing to teach learners on their programmes of study will be vital to ensure that the most complete sources of evidence are available on which to base your holistic qualification grade judgement. Where the pandemic has impacted your delivery, for example in the cases of practical units, or those requiring specialist equipment, consider how you might prioritise these, alongside units important for HEI admissions, to enable learners to generate evidence that can cover the breadth of the course and so they can progress with confidence.

You should be able to use your delivery and assessment plans to evaluate the situation for each learner. **We have also been provided [guidance](#) and a template to capture additional cohort-level 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.

## 3. 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.
- Alternative Assessments (mocks) could be those from a 'past paper', publishers or they might be teacher-devised tasks or tests.
- 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

## 4. 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.
- Coverage of learning aims across the content taught
- 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, e.g. a January 2021 external assessment completed when a learner felt ill or were disrupted due to school/college closures could be less representative than a piece of homework from earlier in the course completed when they were well and prepared.
- 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.
- Consider also 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.

## 5. 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?



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- Where a learner has not been present for coverage of any of the course.
- 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 and external assessment grade descriptors** – The [specification](#) should be referred to in understanding the unit-level requirements in normal times.
- [Past Papers and Mark Schemes](#) – These can be used to gather evidence for external assessments that are not taking place this year.
- [Lead Examiner reports](#) – these can be used to familiarise yourself with the application of the mark scheme for external assessments that have taken place.
- **Centre Standardisation Materials** (available via the OSCA subsite in EOL) – These 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.

## 6. 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 and Head of Centre).

[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.**

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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 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\*.

### Making changes to Q-TAGs

In light of 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, categorised as 'B1' (most similar to GCSE and A Levels), centres will determine a qualification teacher assessed grade for their learners based on a range of evidence gathered about their performance throughout their course of study.

As part of Ofqual's Vocational Contingency Regulatory Framework 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

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applied a consistent standard in their assessment of the 2021 cohort compared to previous years in which assessments took place.

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. 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.

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- 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.

This information should be compiled for each sector at each level and for each centre as a whole (for example, all Tech Award grades, or all L3 Nationals RQF 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 be mindful 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.

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

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After all grading decisions have been made, centres should review the aggregate grade distribution for each sector and suite (e.g., L3 Nationals (RQF), L1/L2 Tech Awards). 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 a Tech Award, 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

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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.



# 9. Sector Specific Guidance

## Childcare Licence to Practise Qualifications

Pearson BTEC Level 3 National Extended Diploma in Children's Play, Learning and Development (Early Years Educator).

A Q-TAG can be applied to this qualification **however**, all mandatory units need to be assessed and passed. The reduced work-placement also must be undertaken. The unit 4 External Assessment does not need to be taken this academic year.

Pearson BTEC Level 3 National Diploma in Children's Play, Learning and Development (Early Years Educator), all units of this qualification are mandatory and linked to the licence to practise and will need to be formally assessed.

Further guidance for Childcare licence to practice qualifications will be made available in April on our webpage [here](#).

## Sport

A Q-TAG can be applied to these qualifications however, the respective units must be fully assessed, as they are mapped to CIMSPA professional standards or IOL occupational standards respectively:

## BTEC Nationals Sport 2019

For all BTEC RQF 2019 Sport Qualifications

C1, C2, C4, D1, D4, 24 and 25

For Learners on or progressing to the Diploma and or the Extended Diploma in Sport, Fitness and Personal Training, in addition U4 and U21 must be assessed if chosen as optional units.

These units must be included in your evidence used towards the Q-TAG judgment.

## BTEC National Diploma in Fitness Services (2016)

For the BTEC RQF 2016 National Diploma in Fitness Services, the following units 13 and 14 must be fully assessed. If 15 and 16 are part of the assessment plan they will need to be fully assessed. These units must be included in your evidence used towards the Q-TAG judgment. **Further guidance to follow.**

### **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.

### 10. The administrative steps you will take



For further information on administrative steps please refer to our full [Administration Guidance for BTEC](#)

## 11. Equalities

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.
- **Special consideration** requests for external assessments, in the event that a learner is unable to take an assessment or suffers a traumatic event that might affect their performance, will not be required this summer because learners will not be taking their exams. However, where illness or other personal circumstances might have temporarily affected performance, for example in mock exams or internal assessments, centres should bear that in mind when making their judgements.

## 12. Bias and Objectivity

Please refer to Ofqual's guidance for centre's on making Objective Judgements [here](#).

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

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

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- 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.
- 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.

### 13. 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-level 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.

### 14. 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 have provided further details to clarify the arrangements for learners who wish to appeal their result.

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Ofqual has stated that for those qualifications most closely aligned to GCSEs, AS and A levels, awarding organisations will be permitted to take similar approaches to appeals.

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 retain any information relating to a learner's access arrangements, or personal circumstances affecting their performance, which has been taken into account 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.

Further information in relation to BTEC Appeals was released 4 June and available on the following links:

- **[Appeals Overview](#)**
- **[Evidence Checklist](#)**
- **[Appeals Guidance](#)**



## 15. 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. We will utilise these existing policies, to support the alternative processes this year. **Please also find the BTEC Centre Policy for Q-TAGs, below and in Annex B.**
- 'Common' sources of evidence will be set out by Pearson. **Please note: This is equivalent to the 'basket of evidence' referred to in the GQ process, and is agreed by all members of the VTQ JCQ inter-AO group, recognising the need to align on this as GQ Exam Boards have done.**
- 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.
- **As outlined in the VCRF, 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. We will utilise these existing policies, to support the alternative processes this year.

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.

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## 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 the [guidance](#) 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 our guidance [here](#) 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 Ofqual's Vocational Contingency Regulatory Framework (VCRF) and Guidance that any Q-TAG is based on appropriate sources of evidence

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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 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 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).
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:

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- 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 in order to shape parity across centres.

BTEC is made up of a large proportion 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 also 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).

Ofqual guidance states that all qualifications issued this year will need to be Quality Assured.

- The process for BTEC quality assurance is well established and our approach will be to continue working with you collaboratively to support this requirement.

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- 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.
- To reflect the change of purpose, only three learners from one unit will be selected for review\*

*\*Note that License to Practise qualifications will continue under the normal sampling requirements.*

## 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 are able to 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 take into account 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
- 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.

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

- Whether the centre has submitted the Annual Centre Declaration;
- Whether the centre has submitted their policies for review as part of LSV QA
- Late registration patterns outside of normal behaviour
- 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)

## 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 exams 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

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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.
- 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

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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).



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

A non-certificating ('mid-flight') learner, is a learner part way through a course of study (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 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.

	Certificating learners that will 'top-up' in 2021/22	Mid-flight Learners (completing after 31 Aug 2021)
Entries for externally assessed units	25 March 2021	25 March 2021
Unit-level claims for completed units	When assessment is completed	When assessment is completed
Flag units for 'reduced assessment' <i>Now extended to all units due to be assessed, but where assessment could not take place between 1 August 2020 – 31 August 2021</i>	31 August 2021*	31 August 2021*
Qualification-level Teacher Assessed Grade	18 June 2021	<b>x</b>
Head of Centre Declaration	18 June 2021	18 June 2021

# Guidance for certificating and non-certificating learners

\*Please note: For mid-flight learners we expect that a TAG (component or qualification-level) will be requested by Pearson during the learner's year of certification. At the time of writing, this will apply only to those units which were due to be assessed between 1 August 2020 – 31 August 2021, including external assessments. For internal assessments this means that all units scheduled to be assessed (but have not been assessed due to the disruption caused) between these dates should be 'flagged' to us using the reduced assessment functionality - 'Z flag'. This has previously been referred to as permitted assessment reductions. This functionality will allow us to understand which units were not completed this year due to the disruption experienced. We continue to work with the DfE and Ofqual to finalise the approach to 2022 which will enable us to communicate with some certainty how grades will be determined for mid-flight learners.

Learners that enrol onto BTEC courses from September 2021 will be expected to complete all of the relevant assessment (assuming that the VCRF ceases on 31 August 2021).

## 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 notify us of those units (plus any others that were due to be, but were not, assessed between 1 August 2020 – 31 August 2021) 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 **by 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.

For further information on the administration steps you need to take in relation to mid-flight learners please refer to our [Administration Guidance](#)

## Appendix A - Glossary of Terms

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

## Appendix B – 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 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**

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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).

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