

<b><u>Policy Title</u></b>	<b>NCG Centre Policy and Process notes for Assigning Teacher-Assessed Grades – Summer 2021</b>	
<b><u>Policy Category</u></b>	Compliant	
<b><u>Owner</u></b>	Executive Director of Quality	
<b><u>Group Executive Lead</u></b>	Assistant Director Quality: Performance and Outcomes	
<b><u>Date Written</u></b>	April 2021	
<b><u>Considered By</u></b>	QTLA Forum / E&M Working Group	
<b><u>Approved By</u></b>	Executive Board	
<b><u>Date Approved</u></b>	April 2021	
<b><u>Equality Impact Assessment</u></b>	The implementation of this policy is not considered to have a negative impact on protected characteristics.	
<b><u>Freedom of Information</u></b>	This document will be publicly available through the Groups Publication Scheme.	
<b><u>Review Date</u></b>	April 2022	
<b><u>Policy Summary</u></b>	The purpose of this policy is to provide for a consistent process across all college when assigning teacher assessed grades.	
<b><u>Applicability of Policy</u></b>	<b><u>Consultation Undertaken</u></b>	<b><u>Applicable To</u></b>
Newcastle College	Yes	Yes
Newcastle Sixth	Yes	Yes
Carlisle College	Yes	Yes
Kidderminster College	Yes	Yes
Lewisham College	Yes	Yes
West Lancashire College	Yes	Yes
Southwark College	Yes	Yes
Professional Services	Yes	Yes
<b><u>Changes to Earlier Versions</u></b>		
<b><u>Previous Approval Date</u></b>	<b><u>Summarise Changes Made Here</u></b>	
N/A	N/A	
<b><u>Linked Documents</u></b>		
<b><u>Document Title</u></b>	<b><u>Relevance</u></b>	
Complaints Policy	Provides guidance on how to report, manage and resolve any formal complaints arising from the administration of teacher assessed grades	

## Definitions

The term **Group** refers to the seven colleges and professional services that make up NCG.

The term **college** refers to the constituent parts of NCG and **professional services** refers to NCG's centralised services.

The term **exam centre** refers to the individual college exam centre status – note for Lewisham College and Southwark College this is a single centre; in this context NCG is not an exam centre as college holds this status.

The term **learner/student** is used interchangeably and includes all learners/students, whether young people aged 14-18, learners with specific high needs, apprentices, adult learners or higher education students.

The term **teacher** is used to describe all teaching, training and educational staff, including teachers, lecturers, instructors, skills trainers, learning support practitioners, coaches/mentors, work experience coaches and teachers in managing positions.

The term **staff** refers to all NCG staff in the organisation, including volunteers, sessional workers, agency staff and volunteers.

The term **TAG** refers to teacher assessed grade.

The term **exam board or awarding organisation** is used interchangeably and refers to all in-scope awarding organisations used by NCG.

**Centre Name: [insert college name]**

Head of Centre: [insert principal name and email]

Senior Quality Manager at Centre: [insert VP/DP/Director name and email]

Exams Officer at Centre: (insert name and email)

Address of Centre:

**For NCG (as the college is part of a group)**

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## 1. Statement of Intent

This process note sets out the steps required by staff when completing teacher assessed grades (TAGs) for academic and vocational qualifications in the summer exam series of 2021. It follows guidance published by Ofqual and covers the JCQ requirements for a centre policy.

The NCG process is designed to align with Ofqual and [Exam Board requirements](#) to be as simple and clear as possible, and to build upon the timely, efficient and fair process undertaken in 2020. We gathered feedback from quality and E&M leads following the previous process and have included a number of features from this valuable feedback. This guidance is additionally based on a JCQ example policy template and guidance from the [Federation of Awarding Bodies with regard to Functional Skills](#).

TAGs can be submitted from the 26<sup>th</sup> May until the 18<sup>th</sup> June 2021. The results for Level 3 qualifications will be provisionally published on 10<sup>th</sup> August (e.g. A levels and BTECs) and for Level 2 on the 12<sup>th</sup> August (e.g. GCSEs).

The publication date has been brought forward to allow learners more time for appeals.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Ensure that teacher assessed grades are determined fairly, consistently, free from bias within, and across departments.
- Ensure the operation of effective processes with clear guidelines and support for staff.
- Ensure that all staff involved in the processes clearly understand their roles and responsibilities.
- Support teachers to take evidence-based decisions in line with Joint Council for Qualifications guidance.
- Ensure the consideration of historical centre data in the process, and the appropriate decision making in respect of, teacher assessed grades.
- Support a high standard of internal quality assurance in the allocation of teacher assessed grades.
- Support our centre in meeting its obligations in relation to equality legislation.
- Ensure our centre meets all requirements set out by the Department of Education, Ofqual, the Joint Council for Qualifications and awarding organisations for Summer 2021 qualifications.
- Ensure the process for communicating to candidates and their parents/carers how they will be assessed is clear, in order to give confidence.

## 2. Training, Support and Guidance

2.1. This section of our Centre Policy outlines the training, support and guidance that our centre will provide to those determining teacher assessed grades this year.

- Teachers involved in determining grades in our centre will attend college-based training to help achieve consistency and fairness to all students; staff must confirm that they understand this process before proceeding;
- Teachers will engage fully with all training and support that has been provided by external agencies such as the Joint Council for Qualifications and the awarding organisations and/or AoC where required;
- Teachers must contact the Head of Dept, or Head of Quality if they have any concerns, or require support at any point.

2.2. To ensure objectivity, all staff involved in determining teacher assessed grades will be made aware that:

- Unconscious bias can skew judgements;
- The evidence presented should be valued for its own merit as an indication of performance and attainment;
- Teacher assessed grades should not be influenced by candidates' positive or challenging personal circumstances, character, behaviour, appearance, socio-economic background, or protected characteristics;
- Unconscious bias is more likely to occur in instances where opinions are formed quickly and are not entirely based on the available assessment evidence.

2.3. Arrangements must be made to support newly qualified teachers, and teachers less familiar with formal and regulated assessment

- The Head of Department (or other appropriate leader) must arrange/provide mentoring from experienced teachers to NQTs and teachers less familiar with assessment where required;
- The Head of Department We will put in place additional internal reviews of teacher assessed grades for NQTs and other teachers as appropriate.

### **3. Allocating a Teacher Assessed Grade (TAG) – *Undertaken by the Teacher***

3.1. This section sets out the process to be used by teachers allocating a TAG. Through this policy, NCG will align with the Ofqual Head of Centre Guidance on recommended evidence, and further guidance provided by awarding organisations/Federation of Awarding Organisations. We will ensure that:

- Our teachers will determine grades based on evidence which is commensurate with the standard at which a student is performing, i.e. their demonstrated knowledge, understanding and skills across the content of the course they have been taught;
- Our teachers will record how the evidence was used to arrive at a fair and objective grade, which is free from bias;
- Our teachers will produce an assessment record for each subject cohort and will share this with their Head of Department. Any necessary variations for individual students will also be shared.

- Our teacher judgments will align to the specific requirements of the awarding organisations

The grade(s) assigned will be a combination of the sources described below but is essentially about being able to complete the following statement with upmost professionalism:

***Taking into account the range of available assessment evidence, I judge the learner to have achieved XX grade.***

- 3.2. There is an Ofqual expectation that tutors/course teams/centres use a consistent source of evidence for a class or cohort that relates closely to the specification requirements. The rationale for any exceptions should be documented. The type of assessment used will vary from qualification to qualification, however all candidate evidence used to determine teacher assessed grades, and associated documentation, will be retained and made available for the purposes of external quality assurance and appeals. Note: there is an expectation that all evidence used for this judgment after the 24<sup>th</sup> March will be retained in full, and anything used before this date must be retained wherever possible – the guidance recognises that some evidence prior to the March deadline (for example formative assessment feedback) may have been returned to the learner. The documentation must be retained in line with awarding organisation requirements.

We will follow the hierarchy of assessment below which includes, use of the following as our primary evidence sources of assessment:

- Student work produced in response to assessment materials provided by our awarding organisation(s), including groups of questions, past papers or similar materials such as practise or sample papers;
  - Mock exams taken over the course of study;
  - Internal tests taken by students;
  - Student work produced in centre-devised tasks that reflect the specification, that follow the same format as awarding organisation materials, and have been marked in a way that reflects awarding organisation mark schemes;
  - Non-exam assessment work (often referred to as coursework), even if this has not been fully completed;
  - Substantial class or homework (including work that took place during remote learning).
- 3.3. Additional assessment materials may occasionally be used as additional assessment materials to provide students the opportunity to show what they know, understand or can do in an area of content that has been taught but not yet assessed.
- We may occasionally use additional assessment materials to give students an opportunity to show improvement, for example, to validate or replace an existing piece of evidence.

- We may occasionally use additional assessment materials to support consistency of judgement between teachers or classes by giving everyone the same task to complete.

3.4. A key change from last year is the publication from exam boards a package of support materials to providers including questions and mark schemes. This is intended to provide our teachers with indicative papers and advice about choosing topics, marking, and making grading judgements.

3.5. Table 1 below shows the type of assessments that are to be used in a hierarchy of confidence. Staff should use the highest available level first and work down to ensure that the awarded grade is consistent, this supports the Ofqual requirement that is assessment used aligns to the normal approach (see 3.2). Ultimately it will be the teacher’s judgment, however a number of reality checks and quality assurance processes will be applied.

**Table 1: Hierarchy of Assessment Confidence**

Level 1 (most reliable)	Externally assessed and validated/moderated assignments and tests (Voqs)	<p>These are external summative assessment that have already been completed and align to Exam Board requirements.</p> <p>Note: some learners may not have access to undertake such exams/tests due to the decision to cancel January exams, hence this must be used consistency across the course group. This level will mainly apply to BTECs and other vocational qualifications that have an externally assessed element and as such would be a definitive/useful indicator of unit performance.</p>
Level 2	Internally assessed and validated/moderated assignments and tests (Voqs and some GCSE/Alevel portfolio work)	<p>These are internal summative assessment that have already been completed and align to Exam Board requirements; they have been through IQA; in some cases through EQA. This level will mainly apply to BTECs and other vocational qualifications.</p> <p>Like the above, this is a reliable source of assessment and it is generally aligns with the unit grade awarded.</p>
Level 3	Mocks; Formal Assessment; assignments pending validation	<p>This will include formalised assessment in the forms of A level mocks; organised formal assessments for GCSEs and A level, and any completed vocational summative assessments that have yet to proceed via IQA, including portfolio and project work.</p> <p>Due to the formality of the assessment, this is a reliable form of assessment as grades would be subject to a level of moderation, and therefore consistency.</p>

Level 4	Exam Board set questions	These will be a bank of questions drawn from past papers, from which teachers can draw to develop useful evidence. These have the advantage of coming with ready-published grade criteria and exemplar learner answers. They will be just one in a range of learner assignments that will contribute to the teacher's professional judgement in awarding a grade, and are optional. They need not be taken in exam conditions. Due to the standardised nature of this material and mark schemes, this is a reliable form of assessment to use in the process as primary evidence.
Level 5	Coursework and Homework	<p>This level includes the work learners have completed as formative assessment during the lesson or at home.</p> <p>Witness testimonies from employers, or work experience logs; formative project work would also be categorised here.</p> <p>This level is considered less reliable as the nature of work will vary, and the results will often not be validated or moderated. That said it may be the main source of evidence for some subjects.</p>
Level 6	Other	In the absence of above the teacher should discuss the learner's situation with the college quality lead and additional evidence may need to be drawn from the additional assessment materials list.

3.6. Access Arrangements and Special Considerations. This section of the policy outlines the approach our college will take to provide students with appropriate access arrangements and take into account mitigating circumstances in particular instances.

- Where students have agreed access arrangements or reasonable adjustments (for example a reader or scribe) we will ensure that these arrangements are in place when assessments are being taken.
- Where an assessment has taken place without an agreed reasonable adjustment or access arrangement, we will remove that assessment from the basket of evidence and alternative evidence obtained.
- Where illness or other personal circumstances might have affected performance in assessments used in determining a student's standard of performance, we will take account of this when making judgements.
- We will record, as part of the Assessment Record, how we have incorporated any necessary variations to take account of the impact of illness or personal circumstances on the performance of individual students in assessments.
- To ensure consistency in the application of Special Consideration, we will ensure all teachers have read and understood the document: [JCQ – A](#)

[guide to the special consideration process, with effect from 1 September 2020](#)

#### **4. Reality Checks – *Undertaken by teacher and Head of Dept.***

4.1. Every teacher will have a 1-1 with their line manager will typically be subject specialists, or have a strong working understanding of the curriculum – usually a curriculum manager or department head. The reality check stage is to support the teacher by providing a secondary review of the evidence used to underpin the proposed TAG, to help ensure that the decision is as objective as possible. It is not an assessment of the teacher, or an interrogation, but simply a professional dialogue based on the adequacy of selected assessment, and apparent fairness of proposed TAG. In the event that no such line manager is available, the Head of Quality should refer to the QTLA Forum, or Group QA to determine if a subject expert from another NCG college could assist. Alternatively, a specialist teaching peer can support, under the supervision of a line manager. The line manager will also review the general grade profile of the wider class, or cohort to check for any inconsistencies in the assessment decisions, outliers or unintended bias.

4.2. The teacher and line manager must declare any conflict of interest to the Head of Department/QA Team and this must be recorded on the assessment record.

Heads of Department will consider:

- Any obvious sources of potential unfairness and bias (situations/contexts, difficulty, presentation and format, language, conditions for assessment, marker preconceptions);
- Any apparent bias in teacher assessed grades.

#### **5. Learner Declaration – *Undertaken by teacher and learner***

5.1. The teacher will then make arrangement to explain the assessment process and assessment made available to underpin the TAG with the learner. The teacher will ensure that any relevant reasonable adjustments, have been implemented in the assessment process.

5.2. The learner will confirm that they have understood the process and what assessment has been used to underpin the TAG. This will be recorded formally.

- All staff involved will be made aware of the need to maintain the confidentiality of teacher assessed grades until publication by the exam board – the intention here is to seek to reduce external pressures on the teacher ahead of submission and potential for change during the quality assurance procedure.
- All teachers must ensure that learners understand the differences between the target grade (theoretical target, based on prior attainment), working at



milestone grade (indicative grade at a particular point in time) and TAG (final assessed outcome based on available evidence).

- All teaching staff have been briefed on the requirement to share details of the range of evidence on which students' grades will be based, while ensuring that details of the final grades remain confidential.
- Relevant details from this Policy, including requirements around sharing details of evidence and the confidentiality requirements, have been shared with parents/guardians by publication on the NCG and college website.
- The declaration will be signed on the agreed awarding organisation template, or the NCG template can be used if there is no such version from the awarding organisation is not available.

## **6. Internal Quality Assurance (IQA), Assessment Boards and Recording Decisions**

6.1. The College Lead will ensure that each college has an assessment/progress board(s) or similar to receive and record the TAG decisions and act as a record of formal IQA. The board will additionally arbitrate and rule on any differing views and disputes that were not resolved at stage 2.

The College will ensure that the assessment records adequately document the following:

- Confirmation that internal standardisation is carried out between different cohorts following the same subject/course.
- Confirmation that internal standardisation across all grades will ensure that the assessment record forms the basis of internal standardisation and discussions across teachers to agree the awarding of teacher assessed grades.
- Will review and reflect on individual grading decisions to ensure alignment with the standards as outlined by our awarding organisation(s).
- Where required, will amend individual grade decisions to ensure alignment with the standards as outlined by our awarding organisation(s).
- In respect of equality legislation, consider the range of evidence for students of different protected characteristics that are included in internal standardisation to ensure no group is disadvantaged by ensuring assessment decisions are based on fact, and reasonable adjustments for learners in receipt of such arrangements have been duly considered and applied.
- Compile recent information on the grades awarded to our students in past June series in which exams took place.
- Consider the size of our cohort from year to year and the stability of our college's overall grade outcomes from year to year.
- Consider both subject and college level variation in our outcomes during the internal quality assurance process.

- Prepare a succinct narrative on the outcomes of the review against historic data which, in the event of significant divergence from the qualifications-levels profiles attained in previous examined years, which address the reasons for this divergence. This commentary will be available for subsequent review during the EQA process.
- Comply with our obligations regarding data protection legislation.
- Ensure that the grades accurately reflect the evidence submitted.
- Ensure that evidence is retained electronically or on paper in a secure centre-based system that can be readily shared with our awarding organisation(s). It should be retained in line with awarding organisation requirements.

## 7. External Quality Assurance (EQA)

7.1. This section outlines the arrangements we have in place to ensure the relevant documentation and assessment evidence can be provided in a timely manner for the purposes of External Quality Assurance sampling, and that staff can be made available to respond to enquiries.

- All staff involved will be made aware of the awarding organisation requirements for External Quality Assurance as set out in the **JCQ Guidance**.
- All necessary records of decision-making in relation to determining grades will be securely kept and can be made available for review as required.
- All student evidence on which decisions regarding the determination of grades will be retained in line with awarding organisation requirements and will be made available for review as required.
- Instances where student evidence is not available, for example where the material has previously been returned to students and cannot now be retrieved, will be clearly recorded on the appropriate documentation.
- All staff involved will be briefed on the possibility of interaction with awarding organisations during the different stages of the External Quality Assurance process and can respond promptly and fully to enquiries, including attendance at Virtual Visits should this prove necessary.
- Arrangements must be put in place to respond fully and promptly to any additional requirements/reviews that may be identified as a result of the External Quality Assurance process.

Staff will be made aware that a failure to respond fully and effectively to such additional requirements may result in further action by the awarding organisations, including the withholding of results.

7.2. Once the grades are received by the awarding organisation, the college will be asked to provide samples of student work. Ofqual identify several reasons for this: the time to submit grades is relatively late in the summer term, and exam board do not have much time to collate this and it also provides reassurance

that any centre's evidence will be available to review if necessary. The sample size is expected to be modest and guidance is available on the Ofqual website. relatively modest, in recognition of the workload on centres, and the collection and submission of it should be able to be managed by exams office staff with minimal call on teachers or heads of centre.

- 7.3. As part of the external quality assurance, exam boards will compare the college's 2021 grade submission with their results in previous years when exams took place – that is, 2017, 2018 and 2019. The comparisons that are made will include the cumulative percentage at each grade.

## **8. Centre Submission – Undertaken by Principal and Deputy / Vice Principal**

- 8.1. The Vice Principal for Quality, or equivalent, will then review, handle any final conflicts or disputes and take assurance from the Head of English/maths and/or Head of Quality (or equivalent) that this process has been followed.
- 8.2. The Principal, as Head of Centre, will then review, and seek his/her own assurance from the Vice Principal for Quality/equivalent that the process has been followed. The Principal will need to confirm that due process has been followed.

*"I and my staff have taken note of the Ofqual guidance on making objective judgements, judgements have not been influenced by pressure from students, parents or carers, and I am confident that the judgements are fair and that all relevant student evidence and records are available for inspection, as necessary".*

- 8.3. The Head of Centre will be required to submit a declaration when the data is submitted, which will include the following points. The principal will confirm that:
- These grades have been checked for accuracy, reviewed by a second member of staff and are accurate and represent the professional judgements made by my staff.
  - Entries were appropriate for each candidate in that students entered were those already studying the course, and each candidate has no more than one entry per subject.
  - My centre has met the requirements set out by exam boards/JCQ for internal quality assurance.
  - I am satisfied that each student's grade is based on an appropriately broad range of evidence, including evidence from other centres, providers or specialist teachers if relevant, and is their own work.
  - Each student has been taught (or, in the case of private candidates, has studied) an appropriate amount of content to provide the basis for a grade.
  - Exam board requirements have been met for any private candidates.
  - Access arrangements and reasonable adjustments were provided with appropriate input from the SENCo and other specialists (and where they were not, that has been taken into account).

## 9. Roles and Responsibilities

### **Group Quality Team/Exec Director of Quality will:**

- Work with the QTLA Forum (chair SW) and E&M Working Group (chair GG) and the SLT of NSFC to develop and approve this policy.
- Produce advisory information such as historic grade distributions, measures of value added etc for reference purposes in some cases (e.g. GCSE).
- Receive GCSE grades to calculate the distribution of grades and advise the senior leadership of any apparent outliers.
- Receive and review the summative ALPS milestone reports used to support A level attainment and measures of progress.

### **The Principal (Head of Centre) will:**

- Be responsible for implementing this policy
- Have overall responsibility for the [school/college] as an examinations centre and will ensure that clear roles and responsibilities of all staff are defined.
- Confirm that teacher assessed grade decisions represent the academic judgement made by teachers and that the checks in place ensure these align with the guidance on standards provided by awarding organisations.
- Ensure a robust internal quality assurance process has been produced and signed-off in advance of results being submitted.

### **Senior Leadership Team and Heads of Department will:**

- Provide training and support to our staff.
- Support the Principal in the quality assurance of the final teacher assessed grades.
- Ensure an effective approach within and across departments and authenticating the preliminary outcome from single teacher subjects.
- Be responsible for ensuring staff have a clear understanding of the internal and external quality assurance processes and their role within it.
- Ensure that all teachers within their department make consistent judgements about student evidence in deriving a grade.
- Ensure all staff conduct assessments under the appropriate levels of control with reference to guidance provided by the Joint Council for Qualifications.
- Ensure teachers have the information required to make accurate and fair judgments.
- Ensure that reporting templates/spreadsheets are completed for each qualification that they are submitting.

**Teachers/ Specialist LDD Teachers / SENCo will:**

- Ensure we conduct assessments under our centre's appropriate levels of control and have sufficient evidence, in line with this Centre Policy and guidance from the Joint Council for Qualifications, to provide teacher assessed grades for each student they have entered for a qualification.
- Ensure that the teacher assessed grade they assign to each student is a fair, valid and reliable reflection of the assessed evidence available for each student.
- Make judgements based on what each student has been taught and what they have been assessed on, as outlined in the section on grading in the main JCQ guidance.
- Produce an assessment record for each subject cohort, that includes the nature of the assessment evidence being used, the level of control for assessments considered, and any other evidence that explains the determination of the final teacher assessed grades. Any necessary variations for individual students will also be recorded.
- Securely store and be able to retrieve sufficient evidence to justify their decisions.

**Examinations Officers will:**

- Be responsible for the administration of our final teacher assessed grades and for managing the post-results services.

## **10. Appeal Process**

- 10.1. Appeals will be made by the College, to the Exam Board, where there is an identified error in the data used, data entry or data transcription.

A learner who is dissatisfied with their grade would first submit a request to the College to check whether an administrative error relating to data entry or transcription had been made. If the College finds an error in the grade submitted, it will submit a revised grade to the Exam Board immediately (within 2 working days).

- 10.2. If a learner feels the process has not been followed, or the judgment was not accurate, they can then ask the College to submit an appeal to the Exam Board, along with the evidence used by the College to arrive at the judgment.

The learner must make it explicitly clear in writing to the College, why they feel the TAG was not an accurate reflection. This should not be a bureaucratic process for the learner, simply a need to maintain a record and document the nature of the appeal to support the next stage. An online form should be implemented to assist with this.

## 11. Complaints

- 11.1. If a learner feels aggrieved that the process has not been followed, or that they have been treated unfairly, then they have the right to complain at any time by following the NCG Complaints Policy/aligned College Procedure.

## 12. Malpractice

12.1. This section of our policy outlines the measures in place to prevent malpractice and other breaches of exam regulations, and to deal with such cases if they occur. The consequences of malpractice or maladministration as published in the JCQ guidance: [JCQ Suspected Malpractice: Policies and Procedures](#) and including the risk of a delay to students receiving their grades, up to, and including, removal of centre status have been outlined to all relevant staff.

- Our policies regarding malpractice, maladministration and conflicts of interest have been reviewed to ensure they address the specific challenges of delivery in Summer 2021.
- All staff involved have been made aware of these policies, and have received training in them as necessary.
- All staff involved have been made aware of the specific types of malpractice which may affect the Summer 2021 series including:
  - Improper assistance to students;
  - Bias or discrimination;
  - Breach of trust;
  - Negligence;
  - Failure to appropriately authenticate a student's work;
  - Over direction of students in preparation for common assessments;
  - Allegations that centres submit grades not supported by evidence that they know to be inaccurate;

## 13. Private Candidates

13.1. Our arrangements for assessing Private Candidates to arrive at appropriate grades are very similar to the approaches utilised for internal candidates. Where it has been necessary to utilise different approaches, the **JCQ Guidance on Private Candidates** has been followed and any divergences from our approach for internal candidates have been recorded on the appropriate class/student documentation. In undertaking the review of cohort grades in conjunction with our centre results profiles from previous examined years, the grades determined by our centre for Private Candidates have been excluded from our analysis.