

Information Regarding Private Candidates and Summer 2021 Alternative Awarding Arrangements



Background

On 6 January 2021, the Minister of Education, Peter Weir MLA, cancelled all CCEA GCSE, AS and A2 examinations scheduled for January, February, May and June 2021. Instead, by Formal Direction of the Minister dated 2 March 2021, the approach to awarding grades in Summer 2021 will be based on teacher professional judgements. This guidance for private candidates aligns with the processes and arrangements used to award grades for all other candidates. This should be implemented in accordance with the *GCSE, AS and A Level Awarding Summer 2021: Alternative Arrangements – Process for Heads of Centre* guidance.

In the UK examinations system, a private candidate, also known as an external candidate, is a person who enters an examination but is not enrolled as a student at the centre (school or college) where they sit the examination. They may have prepared themselves for the examination, been taught privately, or studied at an institution which is not a registered examination centre.

Private candidates are often candidates who:

- had previously studied at the centre and wish to resit to improve grades or outcomes;
- seek to progress to particular courses and therefore take a 'year out' before completing the examinations component;
- may be older returning learners, who are wishing to take the examination after private study; and/or
- have been home-schooled.

Centres are not compelled to accept private candidates. Further information on centres that may be willing to accept private candidates can be found in the document [External Candidate Booklet – Information for Candidates](#) available on the CCEA website.

The centre should ensure that this guidance for private candidates is implemented in conjunction with the Head of Centre guidance (*GCSE, AS and A Level Awarding Summer 2021: Alternative Arrangements – Process for Heads of Centre*).

Communicating with private candidates to outline the process

As the alternative awarding arrangements for Summer 2021 will require teacher professional judgement, the centre should engage with the private candidate at the earliest opportunity to develop knowledge of the candidate and their work. Private candidates should not be withdrawn unless in agreement with the candidate. Deciding not to enter or to withdraw a private candidate should only be done in exceptional circumstances.

The Head of Centre should seek advice from CCEA where cases are not straightforward.

The guidance below will help centres and private candidates to understand more about the process.

Process of awarding a Centre Determined Grade for private candidates

This flexible process allows private candidates to be assessed on a broad evidence base and is comprised of three stages:

1. Exploration
2. Centre assessment(s)/CCEA assessment resource(s)
3. Other assessment evidence.

Step 1: Exploration

The centre should explore with the candidate:

- the content they have covered;
- their method of study;
- details of tuition provided;
- any previous relationships with other centres; and
- evidence of study and assessments to allow the centre to tailor the subsequent steps and determine the appropriate content to be covered in the centre assessment and/or CCEA assessment resource.

The centre should also discuss with the candidate if access arrangements are required and ensure these are facilitated when taking any assessments.

This engagement with the candidate could be verbal and completed remotely. The candidate may wish to include a parent or another suitable supporting adult in this conversation.

In October and December 2020, decisions were taken in respect of unit omissions in GCSE, AS and A level qualifications. CCEA also acknowledges disruption to teaching and learning may mean that even in the context of these omissions, certain content may not have been covered. In such cases, the assessment(s) may be adapted accordingly after engaging with the candidate.

Step 2: Centre assessment(s)/CCEA assessment resource(s)

For subjects where entries have been made for private candidates, centres will ensure that they have sufficient evidence to confidently submit an objective Centre Determined Grade. If evidence is limited, it is essential that these candidates complete the CCEA assessment resource(s) or an appropriate adaptation of the assessment resource(s).

It may be that this is the only piece of evidence available for some private candidates. In these exceptional circumstances, basing a judgement solely on this piece of evidence will be acceptable.

The CCEA assessment resource should be taken under the supervision of the centre, which could include on-site or remote supervision, depending on the candidate's circumstances and COVID-19 restrictions in place at the time.

The CCEA assessment resource will be marked by the centre.

Centres must ensure they use the full range of grades as appropriate to the evidence they have available. This includes grade 'U' for work that is below the threshold required for a grade and grade A* for exceptional performance.

The Candidate Assessment Record should also be completed for private candidates.

Step 3: Other assessment evidence

There may be instances where candidates do not have existing or substantive relationships with centres and making judgements about these individuals' performances may be more difficult. Our expectation is that a centre can seek further information from teachers and other education professionals who have been supporting a candidate's learning to allow them to make secure judgements about Centre Determined Grades.

Centres may accept additional evidence produced by the candidate under the direction of acceptable trusted third parties, which may include the following:

- another approved centre;
- a third party with established links to the centre;
- a tutor with established links to the centre;
- a community language organisation; and/or
- a hospital education service.

Due to the potential for conflict of interest, evidence should not be accepted where it has been produced entirely independently or has been supervised only by the student's parent or a private tutor with whom the centre has no established links.

Evidence from acceptable third parties would be accepted without the need for additional validation by the centre. However, centres may wish to validate authenticity where there is evidence of significantly different performance in this evidence compared to the main assessment.

Ensuring fairness

Each Centre Determined Grade must be an objective decision based on evidence of a candidate's knowledge, understanding and skills in relation to the subject. Other factors should not affect this judgement. The law protects people from discrimination on a number of specified characteristics including age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, political opinion, or sexual orientation.

In the present context, fairness requires that Centre Determined Grades are reached on the basis of objective and unbiased assessment of evidence, taking account of relevant considerations and leaving out of account those that are irrelevant.

Heads of Centre should ensure that the evidence used in determining grades is clearly communicated to candidates and parents and is in line with the Centre Determined Grades policy (see *GCSE, AS and A Level Awarding Summer 2021: Alternative Arrangements – Process for Heads of Centre*).

Awarding Centre Determined Grades for private candidates

CCEA will be able to award grades to all students included in a centre's cohort. Heads of Centre must have the same level of confidence in the grade they submit for private candidates as they do for their other students. If a Head of Centre is confident that they and their staff have seen sufficient evidence of the private candidate's work to form a judgement, they can submit a Centre Determined Grade for the candidate.

The Head of Centre should ensure that all evidence which has been used in reaching a judgement is retained, as it may be requested by CCEA.

Private candidates for whom a Centre Determined Grade cannot be submitted

If private candidates cannot be given a Centre Determined Grade by a centre, they, or the Head of Centre at which the entry has been made, should contact CCEA directly to discuss options.

Submission deadlines for Centre Determined Grades

GCE AS and A level – no later than 21 May

GCSE – no later than 4 June

These deadlines have been selected to allow for the CCEA review of evidence process.

Appeals

Private candidates will have the right to appeal to the centre regarding the award of the Centre Determined Grade. Centres must have a written internal appeals process to facilitate this.

The Head of Centre should carefully consider the requirements of their centre appeals and complaints policies, particularly in relation to the separation of duties and personnel involved in earlier stages of the process to ensure fairness in later reviews or appeals.

CCEA will be working with other awarding organisations over the coming months to make sure that a consistent appeals process is put in place and will provide more detailed guidance in advance of the issue of results.

The standard post-results services such as access to scripts, reviews of marking and reviews of moderation will not be available this summer.

Further information

The CCEA helpline is available and can be contacted on (028) 9026 1220.

For those candidates taking non-CCEA examinations, the following details are available:

AQA phone: 0800 197 7162, email: eos@aqa.org.uk

OCR phone: 01223 553 998, email: general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk

Pearson phone: 0345 618 0440, email: support.pearson.com/uk/s/qualification-contactus

WJEC (Eduqas) phone: 029 2026 5000, email: info@wjec.co.uk



© CCEA 2021