

## CCEA Equality Screening Exercise

### Option 7 – Centre Professional Judgement – Implementation Proposal and Guidance for Summer 2021

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## **1 Background and Introduction**

On 6<sup>th</sup> January 2021, the Minister of Education, Peter Weir MLA, cancelled all GCSE and GCE examinations announcing that:

‘All GCSE, AS and A2 exams due to take place in January, February, May and June will be cancelled. Work will continue on the alternative awarding arrangements and further details will be brought forward as soon as possible.’

The change to examinations has required CCEA to adapt the way grades will be awarded. CCEA must provide advice and receive instruction from the Minister of Education about how to proceed. CCEA has previously outlined a range of options for qualifications and examinations in the situation of changes to the health situation as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. CCEA has been working to enable the award of grades for GCSE, AS and A level this summer to facilitate the progression of students to college, higher education, training, apprenticeships, or employment.

Following the Minister’s letter to school Principals on 9 January 2021, CCEA built a range of key assumptions and risks. Along with other policy consideration an options assessment for the approach to alternative awarding approaches, CCEA has refined previous advice and the approach below will be the way to proceed.

Teachers are the best placed to assess and understand the impact of lost teaching and learning at individual pupil level. A grade will be provided by centres following set procedures and advice, guided by the inclusion of an ‘assessment tool’ wherever possible. The grade will be awarded for the full qualification outcome (cash in).

The approach is a five step process:

- Step 1: Guidance, Information and Readiness
- Step 2: Assessment Tool and Evidence Gathering
- Step 3: Centre-Based Judgement and Moderation
- Step 4: Centre validation and Award
- Step 5: Post Award Review Service

More detail is found in the following documents:

- A summary of the approach to Teacher Professional Judgement
- Option 7 ‘Centre Professional Judgement’ – Implementation Proposal and Guidance proposal

This draft guidance is being developed to inform the operational processes and enable CCEA and, potentially, centres to prepare.

The above documents were provided to the panel members to inform their screening of the impact.

## **2 Screening exercise**

A screening exercise was carried out with the following included

- Setting up an equality panel to represent a range of expertise
- Gathering panel views through an Equality Screening Questionnaire

- Screening panel meeting to review feedback and agree impacts
- Reporting

## **2.1 Equality panel screening questionnaire**

The screening panel were asked to consider and comment on the likely impact, in any way, on equality of opportunity and good relations for those affected by this new and temporary process, including an indication of the level of impact on the group, i.e. minor, major, or none. Comments were invited for each question for the nine Section 75 categories.

1. What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this temporary process, for each of the Section 75 equality categories?  
minor/major/none
2. Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 equalities categories?
3. To what extent is the temporary process likely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?  
minor/major/none
4. Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

Additional questions

5. Are there any potential impacts of the process on people with multiple identities?
6. Are there other potential equality impacts relevant to the outcomes outlined that have not been covered?

## 2.2 Panel questionnaire returns

11 returns were received from panel members. In summary;

- In answer to question 1, 10 no impacts and 1 minor/major were received on section 75 categories for Religious belief, Political Opinion, Racial Group, Marital Status and Men and Women Generally. For the category of age, 7 no impacts and 4 minor were received. For Sexual Orientation 9 no impacts and 2 minor were received. For Disability 5 no impacts, 4 minor, 1 major/minor and 1 minor were received. For Dependents 7 no impacts, 3 minor and 1 major were received. One major impact was received for those with Disabilities.
- In answer to question 2, up to 7 yes responses were received for the nine categories. These included:
  1. Including opportunities for collaboration between schools for Religious Belief and Political Opinion
  2. Clear instructions about new or mature candidates – often referred to as private candidates
  3. Could limit entries but this would have negative impact on schools who for example complete Maths in one year. Could also impact on matures students in the MET for example
  4. Access to learning during the pandemic
  5. Children of key workers need to be taken into account when grades are awarded. This is why an 'overall' grade the student would have achieved is so important.
- In response to question 3 - 3 minor impacts were recorded but these had already been raised and discussed in Question 1.
- In response to question 4 - Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion, or racial group, 1 yes response was received in each category – religious belief and political opinion. The response was:
  1. opportunities for collaboration between schools from different sectors.

Two yes responses were received in response to the question on multiple identities and these had been discussed and closed out in Question 1:

1. Access to learning during pandemic that might have consequences for compiling evidence in support of a final grade
2. Lack of engagement in home schooling may be an issue when final grades are awarded if schools remain closed beyond 22<sup>nd</sup> February. This lack of engagement may have been for many section 75 reasons.

## 2.3 Screening panel meeting

The panel was invited to attend a MST meeting to allow for discussion on the responses and decide on the level of impact for each of the section 75 groups.

Where there was no impact in an equality category that it would be recorded as such and discussion was mainly based around the comments in relation to minor and major impacts. The consultation was in relation to additional bias that may have been introduced into the system by the proposals or additional bias exacerbated by the current conditions could be factored into discussion.

Discussion at the meeting considered the impacts recorded through the questionnaire and concluded that no major impacts on section 75 groups would be as a result of new bias being introduced.

### 3. Outcomes

Major Impact 0  
Minor impact 9  
No impact 0

The Option 7 'Centre Professional Judgement' – Implementation Proposal and Guidance will not have major impact on the equality for the Section 75 groups.

### 4. Approvals

	Name	Job Title	Date
Screened by	Name L	Programme Manager (Temporary)	20 <sup>th</sup> January 2021
Approved by	Name A	Head of Resources	20 <sup>th</sup> January 2021

## Appendix 1

### **Minutes of the Equality Screening Exercise in Relation to Option 7 – Teacher Professional Judgement – Implementation Proposal and Guidance for Summer 2021**

**Date:** 21 January 2021

**In attendance:** Name L (Chair), Name A, Name D, Name F, Name H, Name I, Name M, Name G, Name K, Name N, Name O, Name P, Name Q, Name B.

#### **Apologies:**

N/A

Name B welcomed the panel and thanked them for the timely turnaround in forwarding the completed questionnaires for the meeting and for their contribution. She then briefed the panel on housekeeping issues for the afternoon and then introduced the Chair.

The Chair opened by advising that the meeting was to discuss Option 7 – Teacher Professional Judgement – Implementation Proposal and Guidance for Summer 2021. ‘This is the result of the cancellation of all GCSE, AS and A2 exams by Peter Weir on 6<sup>th</sup> January 2021. The change has required CCEA to adapt the way grades will be awarded. There are a total of 11 questionnaire responses and where there is no impact in an equality category it will be recorded as such and discussion will be based around comments in relation to minor and major impacts. It is important to emphasise that this is in relation to new or additional bias to the system of awarding to the normal trends experienced in previous typical examination series. We will now move through the categories for Question 1.’

The Chair then proceeded to go through each category as itemised in the equality screening document.

Question 1

#### **1 Religious Belief**

<b>Major /Minor Impact</b>	<b>Minor Impact</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Responses</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>

The Chair advised that there was a common theme throughout the process by one panel member who felt that there was no impact in any of the nine categories and that they had qualified their reasoning with the following statement: -

*‘The Centre Professional Judgement process for S2021 is almost identical to that used in S2020 which has to date identified no evidence of bias/discrimination towards any candidate.’*

The Chair then read the comments in relation to the major/minor impact score.

*‘The process of using teacher professional judgement to awarding grades introduces a personal element in the teacher judgement that would not be present in the normal*

awarding process. Bias, both conscious and unconscious needs to be managed carefully and the Contingency 7 sets out proposals to do this. However, there would remain a potential for bias. This would affect all protected characteristics but may be more sensitive an issue for some characteristics over others.

*In addition, the proposed approach does not provide an opportunity for private candidates to obtain a grade this summer thus negatively impacting their equality of opportunity. Private candidates may be more likely to be found in the protected characteristics of age, marital status, men and women generally, dependants.'*

The Chair advised that in relation to the first statement, having considered the summary report it states that Teachers are best placed to assess and understand the impact of lost teaching and learning at individual pupil level.

The Chair invited comments from the panel members.

The panel member who had made the comment advised that their concern was one more of perception and agreed that it should be recorded as minor.

In relation to the second statement the Chair referred to page 8 of the report in relation to private candidates. The Chair invited comments from the panel.

It was reported that CCEA had provided advice to DE on private candidate assessment and that the discretion was always with the Centre. It was also advised that the CE of CCEA has sent advice to DE.

Whilst it was accepted that arrangements have still to be finalised for private candidates it was agreed that any impact would be minor.

**Recommendation:**

The Chair recommended that unless anyone had anything further to add that the impact be recorded as minor.

Agreed by the panel.

**2. Political Opinion**

Major /Minor Impact	Minor Impact	None	Responses
1	0	10	11

**Recommendation**

The Chair advised that the same comments as before in relation to teacher professional judgement and private candidates had been raised and as both had been discussed that the impact be recorded as minor.

Agreed by the panel.

**3 Racial Group**

Major/Minor Impact	Minor Impact	None	Responses
1	0	10	11

**Recommendation:**

The Chair advised that the same comments as before in relation to teacher professional judgement and private candidates had been raised and as both had been discussed that the impact be recorded as minor.

Agreed by the panel.

**4 Age**

Major Impact	Minor Impact	None	Responses
0	4	7	11

The Chair advised that the same comments as before in relation to teacher professional judgement and private candidates had been raised and confirmed that both had been closed off.

Other comments in relation to age are as follows:

*'Older candidates are more likely to be private entries or from a centre where they don't have an academic history. It will be harder to assess this group.'*

*Potentially difficult for new or mature candidates who may have limited existing data with a centre.*

*Proposals could allow students in Year 11 to enter and cash in early for GCSE subjects as entries have not come in yet. As teacher professional judgement will be used, it could allow these candidates to achieve a GCSE without completing the course. The same could apply for AS to A Level.'*

Discussion took place in relation to maths in particular and that advice had been given to DE as it could possibly affect 3.5k students.

**Recommendation**

The Chair recommended that unless anyone had anything further to add that the impact be recorded as minor.

Agreed by the panel.

**5 Marital Status**

Major Impact	Minor Impact	None	Responses
0	1	10	11

**Recommendation:**



The Chair advised that the same issues as before in relation to 'teacher professional judgement and private candidates' had been raised and as both had been discussed that the impact be recorded as minor.

The Chair recommended that unless anyone had anything further to add that the impact be recorded as minor.

Agreed by the panel.

## **6 Sexual Orientation**

Major Impact	Minor Impact	None	Responses
0	2	9	11

### **Recommendation:**

The Chair advised that the same issue as before in relation to 'teacher professional judgement and private candidates' had been raised and recommended that unless anyone had anything further to add that the impact be recorded as minor.

Agreed by the panel.

## **7. Men and Women Generally**

Major Impact	Minor Impact	None	Responses
	1	10	11

The Chair advised that the same issue as before in relation to relation to 'teacher professional judgement and private candidates' had been raised and as both had been discussed that the impact be recorded as minor.

### **Recommendation:**

The Chair recommended that unless anyone had anything further to add that the impact be recorded as minor.

Agreed by the panel.

## **8. Disability**

Major Impact	Major/Minor	Minor Impact	None	Responses
1	1	4	5	11

The Chair read the comment in relation to major impact:

*'Using school's previous performance has a greater negative effect on pupils from less affluent areas. People from this category have a greater likelihood of living in areas of social deprivation so this will have a disproportionate effect on this group.'*

*There was no information in the papers as to how CCEA will mitigate against this effect.*

*Although this is used only in the challenge function, it is still an area CCEA need to consider mitigation for.*

*Again, this group have a greater likelihood of being in a low socio economic group. The impact of learning from home is greater on this group. So COVID disruption is more likely to mean this group do not reflect their best ability in assessments this year. Basing grades solely on their achievements in the last two school years will be likely to lower their grade. A fairer assessment would be over their longer school career.'*

The panel member who had made the above comment felt that this particular group are 'hit hard' as there is no additional funding for IT equipment and felt that the lack of ability to learn this year would result in performance falling.

Whilst this was recognised it was put forward that structural issues in the system have existed in other years but it is something the Awarding Organisation are not in a position to address.

The Chair acknowledged comments from panel members that everything was being done within CCEA's remit and acknowledging the disadvantage suggested that the impact move from major to minor.

The Chair then read the comments to justify the additional minor impact scores:

*'Access to learning during pandemic.*

*There may be issues for candidates that have Aspergers/Autism where the change in circumstance, ie. cancellation of examinations and the resultant change in arrangements in place of examinations, could cause added anxiety, stress etc. and effect their performance.*

*Difficulty for people with a disability who are producing working independently and usually have Classroom Assistant support.'*

**Recommendation:**

The Chair recommended that unless anyone had anything further to add that the impact be recorded as minor.

Agreed by the panel

**9. Dependants**

Major Impact	Minor Impact	None	Responses
1	3	7	11

The Chair read the comment in relation to major impact:

*'This group are likely to have been 'hit' twice by COVID disruption. For themselves and for the people who they are responsible for. When at home they may not be able to engage in study because of their caring responsibilities.*

*This will make it more difficult for these people to show their abilities in assessments.'*

The Chair invited comments from the panel.

It was suggested that there is flexibility as there are a range of indicators for schools to use which was accepted and agreed that the issue could be mitigated to minor impact.

The Chair then shared the comments in relation to minor impact:

*'Access to learning during pandemic*

*Children of keyworkers may lack the support other children are receiving with home schooling. This could lead to these children being further behind their peers.'*

There was discussion in relation to the above and it was disputed that children of keyworkers lacking support from home schooling are no more disadvantaged in comparison to those being home schooled by parents.

### **Recommendation:**

The Chair recommended that unless anyone had anything further to add that the impact be recorded as minor.

Agreed by the panel

### Question 2

The Chair advised that in the main everyone felt there are no opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 equality categories. The Chair read the one comment made by a panel member:

*'Opportunities for collaboration between schools from different sectors.'*

The Chair advised that everything else had been covered in the previous question.

### **Summary**

The Chair advised that there was nothing further to report from Questions 3&4 as everything had previously been covered.

The Chair summarised the final recommendations of the panel: from the nine areas under review minor impacts were now concluded in all nine areas in relation to the outcomes following discussion on Option 7 – Teacher Professional Judgement – Implementation Proposal and Guidance for Summer 2021.

The Chair advised that under the area of additional considerations the following had been put forward:

*'Access to learning during pandemic that might have consequences for compiling evidence in support of a final grade*

*Lack of engagement in home schooling may be an issue when final grades are awarded if schools remain closed beyond 22<sup>nd</sup> February. This lack of engagement may have been for many section 75 reasons.'*

The Chair confirmed that both these issues had been covered in the discussion and that assurance had been given that there was no additional bias and that minor impact had been agreed and recorded across all sections.

The Chair advised that under the area of other considerations the following had been put forward:

*'There appear to be a number of differences between what CCEA is offering and what may be offered by other AOs (regulated by Ofqual) who offer GCSE and A level qualifications in Northern Ireland. Notably, these potential differences are not confirmed at this stage as Ofqual just launched a consultation (15/01/21).*

- *The CCEA paper states "...Any grades submitted to CCEA for awarding must reflect a fair, reasonable and carefully considered judgement of the most likely grade a student would have achieved if they had sat their exams..." However, at the moment, Ofqual is discussing the idea that what centres submit should be a reflection of actual, evidenced performance of candidates at the time of submission, not a prediction of (now cancelled) examination performance.*
- *Ofqual is discussing re-sit opportunities, which is not mentioned in the CCEA TPJ papers.*
- *CCEA has decided to use an assessment tool, that it also states will "...not be compulsory..." Ofqual is discussing a compulsory tool, which it is now consulting on.*

*These should be monitored by CCEA to ascertain any differences between its qualifications and the same qualifications offered in schools here that are administered by AOs from England, who, because they are regulated by Ofqual, could end up having arrangements that are more or less advantageous to individuals using different AOs. This would create inequalities within and amongst centres here in Northern Ireland. It would also clearly create differences in subject results between candidates in England and/or Wales and candidates here.*

*Cognisance needs to be taken of what approach is being agreed in England, Wales and Scotland in order to ensure that GCSE and GCE grades issued to NI students by CCEA carry the same currency. There is a risk that a different approach to awarding grades by CCEA may limit the opportunities of NI students issued with CCEA grades to compete for higher education places.*

*Equality of access to remote learning – do those in more affluent areas have greater access to this? What about those in rural areas who have poor internet connection. Will this be taken into consideration when submitting teacher professional judgement grades? How do you ensure parity from one centre to the other?*

*Criteria for arriving at grades – should there be a standard approach across all schools? Should factors such as attendance, attitude to work, lateness to class etc be considered and if so, if it is considered in one school, should it be in another. These factors can be impacted by external environments and can often be out the student’s control.’*

The Chair clarified that the above highlighted the differences between CCEA and other Awarding Organisations and advised that they would record the comments but that they were outside the remit of the exercise today.

The Chair closed the meeting by thanking the panel for their time and contribution.

Name B