



PART OF **nocn** GROUP

# **SUMMER 2020 ASSESSMENT SERIES**

**Guidance for centres regarding estimated  
results and adaptations**

## **Version**

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[www.nocn.org.uk](http://www.nocn.org.uk)

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## Section 1 - Introduction

This document is intended to provide guidance to centres regarding the calculation of results for learners who have been affected by the COVID-19 disruption during the summer assessment series. This follows on from the government direction for Vocational and Technical Qualifications, found [here](#). Ofqual's communication, issued to Awarding Organisations on 9<sup>th</sup> April 2020, confirms the direction for awarding vocational and technical qualifications this summer:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/awarding-vocational-and-technical-qualifications-this-summer>.

The direction indicates that, where possible, learners who are taking vocational and technical qualifications that are used for progression to and through employment, further or higher education, should be issued a set of results this summer in order to allow them to progress to the next stage of their lives. For some assessments, this means that centres will need to calculate learner results.

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to centres on the estimating of learners' results. The guidance within this document applies to all in scope NOCN qualifications, is not exhaustive, and provides guidance to centres in the current climate. Please note that due to the development and changes of the Covid-19 pandemic, changes may occur swiftly. Therefore, please ensure that you are accessing the latest version online.

This document has been created by NOCN, utilising information provided by Ofqual, and based on a common approach developed through collaboration with other Awarding Organisations. This was led by the Federation of Awarding Bodies.

### Scope

This guidance applies to NOCN general and vocational qualifications, across all sectors, which have had a 'calculated results' mitigation applied.

To see whether a qualification has had a 'calculate results' mitigation applied, please refer to our official website here: <https://www.nocn.org.uk/what-we-do/qualifications/guidance-for-centre-assessment-grades/>

There is additional supporting information specifically for Functional Skills Qualifications (both legacy and reform) available in Appendix 1.

### Valid Registration Dates

The calculated result process applies to all learners still on programme and expected to complete between 20<sup>th</sup> March and 31<sup>st</sup> July 2020. Centres must not include results for any learner they would not expect to have taken the assessment during this period.

Where learners have not been registered due to the COVID-19 disruption, NOCN will liaise with centres to ensure a timely registration on NOCN systems and ensure these learners are also included in the process.

## Section 2 – How Estimation Will Work

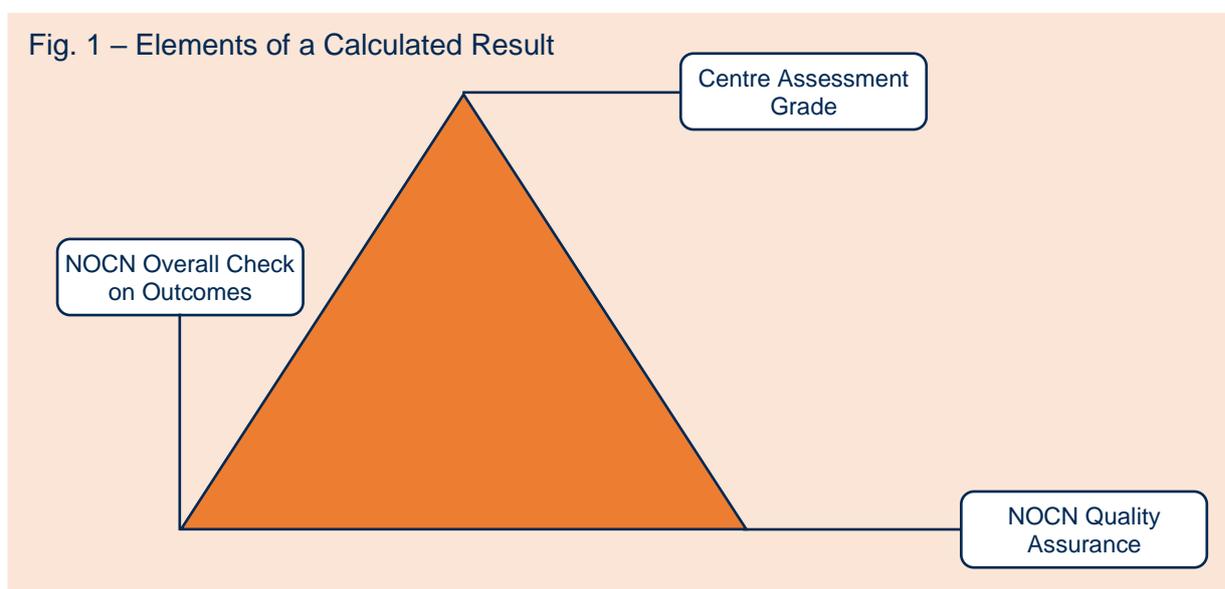
In line with other Awarding Organisations, NOCN has taken the approach that it will, in conjunction with the judgements of its centres, and where it is possible and safe to do so, estimate and issue a **calculated result** for learners who have been affected by the COVID disruption. A calculated result will be based on a centre’s **Centre Assessment Grade (CAG)**.

A **Centre assessment grade (CAG)** is the term used throughout this guidance to refer to the evidence-based, provisional, judgement of a learner’s unit (or component for Functional Skills) result which a Centre submits to NOCN. Only when quality assured by NOCN will a **calculated result** be issued<sup>1</sup>.

The calculated result will consist of a CAG, determined by the Centre, that will be subject to Quality Assurance activities by NOCN. Once Quality Assurance activities have been completed, NOCN will complete an overall check on outcomes to confirm the accuracy and profile of results before confirming these to centres.

The calculated result will be used by centres to claim for learner achievement of the unit/qualification and therefore must meet qualification and sector requirements. Learners who receive a calculated result will be issued with the same qualification certificate that they would have expected to receive if they completed their qualification outside of the COVID-19 disruption.

This is illustrated by the figure below, which has been provided by Ofqual:



### Estimation Process Timeline

The timeline of activities has been devised to ensure that calculated results are issued by NOCN in line with the national release of GCSE results (Entry Level to Level 2 NOCN qualifications) and A-Levels (Level 3 and above qualifications).

<sup>1</sup> Please note that One Awards will register, award and quality assurer CAGs for One Awards centres.

The timeline that will enable NOCN to issue timely calculated results is detailed in the timetable below:

<b>1</b>	<b>Ofqual Consultation on exceptional arrangements</b>	<b>24<sup>th</sup> April to 8<sup>th</sup> May</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>NOCN publishes policy statement and guidance to centres</b>	<b>13<sup>th</sup> May</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Centre ensures all affected learners are registered via Quartzweb</b>	<b>By 27<sup>th</sup> May</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Centre develops own calculation and adaption policies</b>	<b>By 5<sup>th</sup> June</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Centre runs report for spreadsheet of active learners on Quartzweb</b>	<b>From 8<sup>th</sup> June</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Centre determines all CAGs, completes spreadsheet and submits via Quartzweb</b>	<b>8<sup>th</sup> June to 31<sup>st</sup> July</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>NOCN quality assures submitted CAGs and confirms calculated grades for <u>Level 3 and above</u> qualifications. Once confirmed, centres can submit claims via Quartzweb.</b>	<b>By 12<sup>th</sup> August</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>NOCN quality assures submitted CAGs and confirms calculated grades for <u>Entry Level to Level 2</u> qualifications. Once confirmed, centres can submit claims via Quartzweb.</b>	<b>By 19<sup>th</sup> August</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>NOCN issues any due certificates using normal procedure</b>	<b>From 13<sup>th</sup> August</b>

## Section 3 – Preparation for Estimation

For qualifications where the mitigation has been deemed as ‘calculated results’, centres must ensure that they are sufficiently prepared to complete the process in line with the timescales detailed above. Where centres deem that adaption or delayed assessment is the most appropriate mitigation for these qualifications, or for some learners, the rationale should be discussed with the EQA and outlined in the Centre’s policy. See page 11.

### Registration of Learners

Centres must ensure that any learner who was due to complete an NOCN assessment between 20<sup>th</sup> March and 31<sup>st</sup> July 2020 are registered with NOCN at the earliest opportunity. This includes any learners where the Centre expects that the learner would have failed the assessment.

**All learners must be registered with NOCN via Quartzweb by 27<sup>th</sup> May.**

If, after this period, your Centre discovers that a learner has not been registered, you must contact NOCN as soon as you are able to discuss available options.

### Claims for Fully Completed Assessments

Where a learner has fully completed the assessment for a unit, centres must continue to claim for these as normal. This only applies where all of a unit’s learning outcomes and assessment criteria has been through the full internal centre quality assurance process. This includes assessment and internal quality assurance. This will aid NOCN in issuing calculated results, as well as ensuring learners have the best chance of obtaining a correct and valid result.

### Estimation Policy Development

Prior to the period where CAGs will be submitted, centres must ensure that they have finalised their own internal policy and procedure for how they are going to approach the estimation process. This should reflect the centre’s own internal quality system and be in line with this guidance document and that published by Ofqual.

NOCN recognises that this is a new process for all centres and that there may be some apprehension regarding what the policy should look like. There is no one size fits all - its key purpose is to provide a justification and rationale for how and why your Centre has reached its decisions regarding calculating your Centre Assessment Grades.

Your policy does not need to be in any particular format, but should be clear and comprehensive. A template has been created by NOCN that can be amended/adapted by centres.

As a minimum, the policy document should contain:

- The qualifications that are in scope, alongside their mitigations.
- The ‘method’ used in determining CAGs for each qualification. This includes detailing the key personnel involved and their roles.
- The types of evidence available for use, the trust applied to each type of evidence and how an overall CAG will be determined.

- A rationale of how the 'method' for determining CAGs is valid, robust, maximises trusted evidence and fulfils qualification/unit requirements.
- How minimum thresholds of evidence will be ensured.
- Key risks identified by the Centre and how these will be mitigated.
- Justification and rationale for cases where estimations cannot be made or where it would not be appropriate.
- How centres will communicate with learners, ensuring that they are aware of the process and aware of their rights to appeal.
- How centres will support learners where a CAG cannot be determined.
- How standardisation will be used to check validity and accuracy of CAGs before submission to NOCN.
- Details of the sign-off process internally, including review by the Head of Centre.

The completed policy document does not need to be submitted to NOCN by 5<sup>th</sup> June, however, it may be requested by NOCN as part of its quality assurance activities.

## Section 4 – Guidance for Determining Centre Assessment Grades

Tutors/Assessors must ensure that they have familiarised themselves with the guidance published by NOCN and Ofqual.

A learner's CAGs should only be judged by Tutors/Assessors with direct experience of teaching that learner the subject and unit for which the CAG is being judged. Where more than one Tutor/Assessor is responsible for teaching or assessing a learner a unit/qualification, these Tutors/Assessors should work together to reach a judgement about the learner's CAG.

Where more than one Tutor/Assessor is responsible for teaching or assessing a unit or qualification at a particular level, they should work together to standardise their judgement. Judgements must be made in an impartial, balanced and unbiased way; such that the assessment grades are based on evidence of attainment and avoid bias as far as is possible, so that learners are not systematically advantaged or disadvantaged by having or not having a protected characteristic or any other factor (for example character, appearance, social background or special educational needs) that does not relate to their knowledge, skills and abilities in relation to the subject. Protected characteristics are defined by the 2010 Equality Act as, age; disability; gender reassignment; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation; marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy and maternity.

### Centre Assessment Grade Judgements

Tutors/Assessors must identify eligible learners before starting the process of judging learner CAGs. Centres must **NOT** submit CAGs for any learner they would not expect to have taken the exam / assessment during this period.

The following forms of evidence should be used to support judgement, where these are available:

- 'Banked assessments' – where any units have already been claimed and externally quality assured by NOCN (where Centre does not hold DCS)
- Assessments completed and internally quality assured, but not externally quality assured by NOCN.
- Assessments completed, but not internally quality assured.
- Learner work or evidence of marked learner work (held at centre).
- Practice/mock/sample assessments, marked and held at centre.
- Previous examination results or assessment outcomes, for example any re-sitting learners or those who have completed similar qualifications.
- Any formative assessment results.
- Any other marked learner work (held at centre).
- Outcomes of centre synoptic assignment tasks.
- Participation and performance in skills-based activities.
- Overall learner performance and progress, including level of attendance prior to Centre closure, and attendance of distance/remote learning.
- Tutor or Assessor assessment tracking records and individual learning plans.
- Any other records of learner performance over the course of study.
- Internal quality assurance that has taken place.
- Any special considerations that have been applied.

This is not an exhaustive list and evidence is not limited to this list. Centres must consider each learner and how they have engaged with the course of study.

Results of initial and diagnostic assessment can be used but only in the following ways:

- As a benchmark to gauge progress made towards the unit requirements by the learner
- Where this provides evidence that the learner had already met one or more of the unit's assessed requirements at the point at which the initial / diagnostic assessment was taken.

Other forms of evidence may be acceptable, but it is recommended that the centre discusses these with the AO before judging CAGs. It is acknowledged that these forms of evidence would not normally be considered in assessing NOCN qualifications.

All evidence used to support judgement of CAGs may be subject to inspection by the awarding organisation and must be retained in line for at least a 12-month period.

Please note that centres must only use evidence which can be presented to NOCN to allow for a calculated result to be issued. This means that paper evidence which may be inaccessible due to lockdown restrictions cannot be used.

### Method for Determining CAGs

The Centre must consider each eligible learner in turn. For each learner whose CAG is being judged, the Tutor/Assessor should consider:

- At least one piece of valid evidence that demonstrates the learner's progress towards the assessment requirements of the unit.
- The assessment requirements of the unit
- (Where available) the pass descriptor for the unit being considered
- Their knowledge of the learner's ability.
- Any permitted support that would have been given to that learner in completing the assessment (at Entry level).
- Any reasonable adjustment that would have been made to the assessment for that learner in respect of a disability.

The Tutor/Assessor should use the evidence, as well as their professional expertise, to reach a considered judgement about whether that learner would have passed or whether the learner would have failed the unit had they taken the assessment in the usual way. All available evidence should be used and the minimum requirement for judging a learner's CAG is that there must be one piece of valid evidence available.

The evidence used may only show partial achievement of the unit's requirements. In reaching a decision about each learner's unit CAG, Tutors/Assessors must make a judgement that includes a reasonable consideration of whether the learner would have passed had the scheduled programme of learning taken place and been completed by the learner. This includes a judgement where learning has been disrupted about whether the learner would have passed had they completed the full programme of learning. Centres should bear in mind the learner's progression aim when providing a

'pass' CAG for a learner and that this means they believe that the learner would be able to operate in an employment setting in respect of the skills that will be certificated.

In some cases, it may be considered that a learner would have been on the borderline between passing and failing the assessment, but the Tutor/Assessor may feel unable to reach a definitive judgement. In such cases it is recommended that:

- where possible, such cases are discussed as part of standardisation.
- Particular attention is paid to the pass descriptor provided by NOCN (For Functional Skills Qualifications only, where this is available for the component being considered).
- comparison is made between the evidence for that learner and evidence considered for other learners felt to be around the borderline but where it has been possible to reach a pass or fail decision.

It is further recommended that borderline decisions could be noted and reconsidered as part of the centre's internal quality assurance check in relation to the overall profile of the CAGs for the unit relative to expectations based on an equivalent historic period.

## Standardisation

Where there is more than one Tutor/Assessor responsible for delivering a unit within the centre and involved in judging CAGs for that unit then these Tutors/Assessors must work together to standardise their judgements.

At the start of the process, Tutors/Assessors should individually consider an initial sample of learners and make provisional judgements about whether each would pass or fail. Any learners who are felt to be on the borderline of pass and fail should be noted. Before judging any further CAGs, the teachers should collaborate to discuss and compare their CAGs, the evidence used, and the judgement applied and reach agreement about the characteristics of pass and fail learners.

As a result of this process, judgements reached about the initial sample of learners may be revisited. The Tutors/Assessors should then complete judgement for all learners but may wish to discuss any borderline decisions with colleagues as required.

## Recording the CAG Judgement Process

When CAGs have been judged for all learners for a particular unit within an individual Centre, the following should be recorded for each unit:

- Total number of learners for whom a CAG has been judged
- Total number for whom a 'pass' is recommended
- Total number for whom a fail is recommended (where applicable)
- The types of evidence used to support the process.

Centres must ensure that they record all of their CAGs, alongside all supporting documentation, on the **Special Arrangements for Calculated Results and Adaptations Spreadsheet**, which will be available from Quartzweb from 8<sup>th</sup> June. Separate instructions will be provided by NOCN, which will guide centres on how the download and submission processes will work. Centres may also decide to

keep their own internal records of the results in addition to the submission that must be made to NOCN. These do not need to be submitted to NOCN, unless requested.

### Submission of CAGs to NOCN

The **Special Arrangements for Calculated Results and Adaptations Spreadsheet** must be fully completed and submitted to NOCN via Quartzweb by no later than 31<sup>st</sup> July 2020. We actively encourage centres to submit their spreadsheet as soon as they are able and to not wait until 31<sup>st</sup> July. This is to help NOCN ensure there are no delays in issuing calculated results for learners.

Where a Centre believes they are not going to meet the deadline, they must contact NOCN at the earliest opportunity.

### Late Submissions

Dependent on the individual circumstance and date of submission after the deadline submission date, NOCN must report details of this to the Regulator to determine the appropriate next step. Both NOCN and centres have the responsibility to prevent the disadvantaging of learners by timely submitting their calculated grades to NOCN to allow for the required quality assurance processes to take place.

NOCN will issue a late submission application form to be used by centres in these circumstances in due course.

### Policy on No Response

A pragmatic approach will be taken regarding centres who are not able to complete the grade calculation process due to the COVID-19 disruption. NOCN supports an open dialogue with its centres to determine the practicability of the Centre in completing the grade calculate process to the required standard.

Where a Centre refuses to work with NOCN to support learners in obtaining their final outcomes or grades, or where there are substantial cause for concern regarding a Centre's ability to complete the due process, NOCN will promptly report this to the Regulator as required.

## Section 5 – The Role of the Head of Centre

The Centre's process for determining CAGs must be overseen and signed off by the Head of Centre **before** CAGs are submitted to NOCN.

The Head of Centre's responsibilities are to ensure:

- Only staff who have taught the learner whose provisional unit result is being judged are involved in judging that learner's result.
- All of those who are judging CAGs are briefed on the process as outlined in this document and are familiar with the requirements of this document and associated materials to support the process (i.e. the relevant Functional Skills Standards for the subject and level being judged and where applicable the Pass Descriptors for that subject and level).
- That there is sufficient valid evidence available to underpin the judgements to be made teachers **before** any CAGs are judged.
- That Tutor/Assessor judgement takes into account any reasonable adjustment that would be made to the assessment in respect of a learner with a disability.
- That judgements are evidence-based and as far as possible, free of any bias in respect of any learner with a protected characteristic or any other factor (for example character, appearance, social background or special educational needs) that does not relate to their knowledge, skills and abilities in relation to the subject.
- That as far as possible, where more than one member of staff is involved in teaching an individual learner for any unit, that these members of staff work together to agree the CAG.
- Where more than one member of staff are responsible for preparing learner for an assessment that these staff work together to standardise their judgements in the way described below.

The Head of Centre must contact NOCN to discuss additional support and options before any CAG is judged where:

- no member of staff is available who has taught any learner whose unit CAG is being judged.
- no evidence is available to support judgement of a CAG for any learner.

CAGs must not be submitted based on judgements made by staff other than those who have taught the learner the unit for which the CAG is submitted. CAGs must not be submitted for any learner where there is no available valid evidence on which to base the judgement.

Once the process has been completed, the Head of Centre must sign off a single submission covering all learners registered for NOCN assessments during the relevant period. This must be a single submission covering all NOCN assessments that the Centre intends to submit. Submissions cannot be staggered or submitted in batches. Sign off is in the form of a declaration that the process has been followed in full.

The declaration includes

- for all learners, confirmation that:
  - for all units, where a CAG is submitted, only staff with experience of teaching that unit to the learner provided their CAG

- at least one piece of valid evidence (see below) per learner was used to reach judgement
- an indication of the types of evidence used for the unit
- confirmation that the Head of Centre has overseen a sense check comparing the numbers and proportions of pass and fail CAGs for each unit with expectations about how each cohort of learners would perform under normal circumstances (see below)
- description of any factors which account for divergence between historic achievement rates and the achievement profile of the CAGs.

Further information regarding the format of this declaration will be issued by NOCN when the window of submission of calculated results opens.

### Sense Checking the Submission

This process covers any assessment which would have taken place between March 20<sup>th</sup> and July 31<sup>st</sup> 2020.

As part of a final sense check ahead of submitting CAGs to NOCN, the Head of Centre must oversee a comparison between:

***For all units:***

- the number of CAGs submitted for each unit and
- the number of results they submitted for each unit for an equivalent historic period (e.g. 20<sup>th</sup> March – 31<sup>st</sup> July 2019). Approximate figures may be used where it is not possible to generate exact figures.

Any variance between the two should be explained for any unit as part of the submission.

***For examined units:***

The Head of Centre should oversee a sense check comparing the numbers and proportions of pass and fail CAGs for each unit with expectations about how each cohort of learners would perform under normal circumstances. A comparison with centre records for an equivalent period of time (e.g. 20<sup>th</sup> March – 31<sup>st</sup> July 2019) should be used for this. The extent of the similarity should be noted and the known factors to explain any variation included as part of the submission to NOCN.

## Section 6 – Other Mitigations

### Adaptions

For some qualifications, NOCN has determined that it may not be possible, or may not be safe, to issue calculated results. This includes for qualifications which:

- Are license to practice.
- The achievement of the qualification does signal occupational competence.
- There are, or may be, health and safety risks in issuing a calculated result.
- Achievement of the qualification may lead to a learner gaining technical employment.
- Due regard for Sector bodies and assessment strategies has had to be taken into account.

A list of qualifications which have the ‘adaption’ mitigation are listed on the NOCN website. This means that calculated results cannot be issued for these qualifications.

For each unit where evidence is not sufficient to claim for learner achievement or, where a unit signals professional competency, centres should look to adapt assessment to ensure fairness to its learners and support learner progression.

Where adapted assessment is necessary, the following are types of learner assessment evidence should be considered to generate evidence for key outcomes of learning:

- Remote testing (this could be paper based, app based, online, audio, video): This should contain content to assess skills, knowledge and understanding which is outlined in the Unit Specification. NOCN is currently working with our system providers to implement remote invigilation to allow learners to complete knowledge assessments in the usual manner.
- Cross-assessing with other units: evidence gathered from assessment in other units undertaken by learners is likely to include content which can be used to contribute more widely to meet assessment criteria elsewhere. This needs to be subject to standardisation by the Centre’s internal quality assurance system.
- Professional Discussion: using and recording professional discussion between a learner and an assessor focusing on, and enhancing, evidence already provided or demonstrated by the learner - including real work activities, practical tasks, a case study, project, portfolio or some other form of assessment.
- Practical assessment: Where possible, evidence may be assessed using remote assessment (video, photographic, portfolio, witness testimony), alongside work already demonstrated and assessed.

Centres must be able to provide evidence to support their assessment decisions. Internal quality assurance and standardisation activities must continue in line with a Centre’s IQA policy and requirements and all records must be retained for external quality assurance.

Centres and curriculum areas must also ensure that any amended assessment methods are:

- Valid - they assess what they are intended to. This can be ensured by mapping new methods and tasks to learning outcomes and assessment criteria.

- Reliable - that methods produce comparable results irrespective of where or when they are applied.
- Sufficient - evidence should be gathered from a variety of sources, where possible. This may be evidence which has already been generated or may involve assessors providing learners with additional and alternative opportunities to demonstrate their competence, knowledge and understanding through a range of reasonable and practicable alternative activities (e.g. open book essay or report writing in lieu of closed book, assessment video observation, time-limited assessments, and professional discussion).

## Delaying Assessment

For a small minority of qualifications, NOCN has determined that they cannot be safely adapted or a calculated result be issued and therefore learner assessment must be delayed until lockdown restrictions have eased. NOCN will amend its permission on these qualifications as soon as it is safe to do so.

A full list of qualifications which have the 'delay' mitigation can be found on the NOCN website here: <https://www.nocn.org.uk/what-we-do/qualifications/guidance-for-centre-assessment-grades/>

## Section 7 – Quality Assurance

### Centre Assessment Grades

To ensure a fair and robust calculation of results by its centres, NOCN will implement a quality assurance sampling activity prior to the confirmation and release of calculated results. This will be completed by the Quality Assurance Team and NOCN External Quality Assurers.

Quality Assurance activities will consist of reviewing the information provided by centres on the required spreadsheet. A risk-based approach will be employed by EQAs. Historical evidence of a Centre's performance will be used to determine the level of confidence and trust in the validity of the Centre's estimations of a learner's calculated result.

In line with the risk-based strategy, the EQA will request a sample of documentary evidence from the Centre for review, as is the case for all external quality assurance monitoring visits. Centres may be requested to submit further samples of evidence if the EQA has deemed that the process has not been followed in line with NOCN guidance.

This approach follows the same principles as its policy on risk-based approach to Centre quality monitoring. This approach is operated by NOCN and its team of External Quality Assurers in normal circumstances and is effective in managing risk.

### Appeals

NOCN will allow learners to have a right of appeal regarding the process for result or outcome estimation. Learners will not be able to appeal their qualification final grade or outcome, but will be able to appeal regarding the process and where they believe their registered Centre, or NOCN as the Awarding Organisation, has not followed the correct process in determining the learner's grade or outcome.

Ofqual has recognised that allowing appeals by learners regarding Centre judgements and validity of evidence supplied for result or outcome calculation would be undesirable and impractical and NOCN supports this view. Centres must ensure that their learners are aware of their right of appeal.

To submit an appeal, learners must state why they believe their registered Centre has not followed due process to [assurance@nocn.org.uk](mailto:assurance@nocn.org.uk).

An appeals form will be issued by NOCN in due course.

## Appendix 1 – Further Guidance Regarding Functional Skills Qualifications

Functional Skills qualifications for Calculated Assessment Grade are:

### Legacy FS Qualifications:

- Maths
- English
- ICT

At all levels (Entry 1 to level 2).

### Reformed FS Qualifications:

- Maths
- English

At all levels (Entry 1 to level 2).

### Eligible Learners

Centres should submit CAGs for all FS learners affected by the Covid-19 disruption. This is defined as **all learners who they would expect to have taken the assessment / exam between 20 March and 31 July**.

This includes:

- Learners attempting the assessment / exam for the first time:
- Learners resitting the assessment. It is acknowledged that learners may have both attempted for the first time and resat an exam /assessment during this period.

### Component Submissions

Centres must submit CAGs at the component level.

Functional Skills **English** Qualifications at each level (Entry 1, Entry 2, Entry 3, Level 1 and Level 2) comprise three separately-assessed components:

- Reading
- Writing
- Speaking, Listening and Communication/Communicating.

This applies to both legacy and reform Functional Skills English Qualifications.

Functional Skills **Mathematics** Qualifications at each level (Entry 1, Entry 2, Entry 3, Level 1 and Level 2) comprise one component.

This applies to both legacy and reformed Functional Skills Mathematics Qualifications. Assessment for reformed Functional Skills consists a single component assessed in two parts, a non-calculator and a calculator section.

**Functional Skills ICT** at each level (Entry 1, Entry 2, Entry 3, Level 1 and Level 2) comprise one component.

Centres should submit CAGs for each component:

- Functional Skills Mathematics Entry to Level 2 qualifications, there is one component submission, for reform FSQ assessments, the submission is for one component with two sections; non-calculator and calculator.
- Functional Skills English Entry to Level 2 comprises of three components; Reading, Writing and SLC. This is for legacy and reform FSQ.
- Functional Skills ICT Entry to Level 2 comprises of one component.

### Estimation Process for FSQ

The following terms governing this process have been agreed by all AOs offering FSQs:

1. This is a one-off, time-limited process offered to minimise disruption caused by measures taken by government in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic so that as far as possible, learners due to take assessments during this period are not disadvantaged.
2. Centres are permitted to make one submission, and this must cover all learners expected to take FSQ assessment between **20 March and 31<sup>st</sup> July 2020**.
3. Once a submission has been made by a centre AOs will not consider any subsequent submission by that centre (except as part of issue resolution requested by AO).
4. There will be **no second submission for 'fail' learners**. For externally assessed components, an opportunity to sit the exam will be offered to all learners who do not pass the component by the awarding organisation as soon as possible after the candidate's final calculated result has been released by the AO.
5. Subject to the outcome of Ofqual's consultation on **Exceptional Arrangements for Assessment and Grading in 2020 (VTQs)**, for final calculated results that have been approved by the AO, there will be no right of appeal by the centre or learner against the **result**. An appeal based on whether the **process** was followed will be offered. The AO will provide an update on this once the outcome of the Ofqual consultation is known.
6. The AO **reserves the right to review evidence** used by centres to reach judgements about CAGs on request. This may be through a quality assurance of the centre's submission and/or through routine EQA when this resumes.
7. As part of quality assurance of a centre's submission, an AO may ask the centre to **reconsider its submitted CAGs** but the AO will not itself take action to change CAGs for any learner without the agreement of the centre.
8. The AO will take all reasonable steps to support centres in resolving quality assurance queries about a centre's submission but as a last resort, **may reject** all or part of the submission.
9. It is expected that for a range of reasons related to the current situation some centres may not be able to participate. These may include for example:
  - a. Centres with furloughed staff
  - b. Centres who are operating at the limits of their capacity such as for example, healthcare providers.

In such cases, every effort will be made to minimise disadvantage but delaying assessment may be unavoidable.

## Guidance for Determining CAGs

Tutors/Assessors must ensure that they have familiarised themselves with the guidance published by NOCN and Ofqual:

- Up to date guidance on the process issued by the awarding organisation.
- The standards for the Functional Skills subject and level being assessed these can be accessed from Ofqual's website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/functional-skills-qualifications-requirements> For legacy FSQs ie Maths and English pre September 2019 and ICT the relevant legacy criteria should be used. For Maths and English learners from September 2019, the standards are published within the Conditions and Requirements documents as appendices.
- For legacy and reformed Maths and English at levels 1 and 2, the awarding organisation common pass descriptors (guidance given below).

## Guidance on the Pass Descriptors

### Level 1 and 2 Mathematics and English Reading and Writing

Pass descriptors have been provided for Maths, English Reading and English Writing at level 1 and 2 (available on MyNOCN). These should be used by teachers judging assessment CAGs for these components for both legacy and reformed FSQs. These are used to help ensure a common understanding of the minimum requirement for a pass for each component.

As part of the process leading to the implementation of reformed Functional Skills Qualifications from September 2019, Functional Skills awarding organisations worked together to develop an approach to standardise awarding of the FSQ components assessed through an exam.

Awarding organisations separately considered exam scripts for these components and noted the characteristics demonstrated by learners who had achieved the same total number of marks as the exam pass mark (eg learners who achieved 28 marks where the pass mark was 28 out of 40). This is defined as a, 'minimally-competent' learner.

Awarding organisations then came together to agree common descriptors of the skills and capabilities typically demonstrated by a 'minimally-competent' learner.

It was noted, and this is acknowledged by the descriptors, that not all minimally competent learners are the same and that in some cases, weak performance against some of the assessed requirements is compensated for by strong performance against other requirements. Teachers should apply this consideration in reaching judgement.

These common descriptors are used by FSQ AOs as part of each AO's process for setting exam pass marks in order to support:

- A common interpretation of the standard required in order to pass the exam
- Consistency between the pass standard required for legacy and reformed qualifications.

The evidence used to develop the descriptors was taken from assessments for legacy qualifications and they are used to support awarding for reformed qualifications. Therefore, these are appropriate and should be used to support judgements for both legacy and reformed assessments.

## Reformed assessments

For reformed assessments, the descriptors are being kept under review and it is planned that further work will take place to consider requirements that have been added or revised as part of Functional Skills Reform. At the present time, this work has been suspended on account of the Covid-19 disruption. At the point in time at which the disruption took place, the reformed qualifications had only been established for about 6 months. This means that evidence is incomplete and still emerging about the reformed pass standard and where awarding for reformed assessments has taken place, this will have taken into account unfamiliar aspects of the new specifications.

The following guidance is given in respect of this:

- Throughout the FSQ reform programme, Ofqual have given AOs guidance that while aspects of the requirements for each component have changed, there was no steer from Government that the *overall standard* required to pass any FSQ assessment should change.
- For awards made so far for reformed FSQs, Ofqual have asked AOs to take into consideration any impacts on achievement caused by the relative unfamiliarity of the requirements of reformed FSQs and to take these into consideration in setting pass marks. In practice, where there is evidence of such impacts this means that pass marks may be set a few marks below where these would be set for a more established qualification. It was expected that this process of the new requirements becoming established would have continued throughout the first year of the reformed qualifications and this includes the period for which CAGs are judged. Teachers judging CAGs should therefore apply a similar judgement in judging learners CAGs for reformed Functional Skills assessments.

## Appendix 2 – Policy Template for Centres

Qualification Title	QAN	Mitigation (Estimate /Delay/ Adapt)	In line with NOCN Mitigation (Y/N)

**For any qualification which you have determined has a different mitigation than the one issued by NOCN, please provide full details and a rationale as to why:**

Estimated Results Policy/Strategy	
The 'method' to be used in determining CAGs for each qualification.	
Key personnel involved in the process and their roles.	
Types of evidence available for use to determine CAG, alongside the trust applied to each type.	

<p>How evidence will be used to determine an overall CAG for each learner.</p>	
<p>How the CAG maximises the use of most trusted evidence</p>	
<p>Rationale for how CAGs will be valid and fulfil qualification/unit requirements.</p>	
<p>How minimum threshold of evidence will be met and ensured.</p>	
<p>Outline key risks regarding the process and Centre mitigations.</p>	
<p>Justification and rationale where CAGs cannot be determined.</p>	
<p>Details of the standardisation process and how it will be used to check validity and accuracy of CAGs before submission to NOCN.</p>	

Details of the Head of Centre sign off process.	
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<b>Supporting Learners</b>	
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How learners will be supported where a CAG cannot be determined	
How learners will be communicated to, ensuring that they are aware of the process and their right to appeal	
How learners where a CAG cannot be determined will be supported and progressed	

<b>Other Supporting Information</b>
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<b>Head of Centre Sign Off</b>	
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Head of Centre Name	
Head of Centre Signature	
Date of Sign Off	

## Document Revision

This is version 1.0 of this guidance document.



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