

Additional guidance on the determination of grades in Applied General and Tech Award qualifications

Introduction

This document should be read in conjunction with the [JCQ Guidance on the determination of grades for A/AS Levels and GCSEs for Summer 2021](#). It focuses on aspects of Applied Generals and Tech Awards which the JCQ guidance does not cover, such as results from banked units. Centres must use the JCQ guidance as the main source of advice.

For students who are completing a qualification, centres should have made entries for:

- the qualification;
- all constituent units for which the student does not already have a banked result;
- any banked units which the student would have re-entered if exams had gone ahead;
- for Applied General students who have entered for the Certificate, any further units which will contribute to the Extended Certificate in 2022 and which the student would have entered this year if exams had gone ahead.

For students who would have entered units but not a qualification if exams had gone ahead, centres should have made entries for those units. However, centres must not submit grades, and no unit results will be issued. Students completing their qualification in 2022 will have the option to re-enter those units but (provided that the entries were made this year) they will not need to do so.

Centres must submit grades at qualification-level only.

Guidance on grading for teachers

This part of the supplementary guidance should be read in conjunction with the corresponding section in the JCQ guidance (pages 20–26).

The list of potential evidence in Step 2 (pages 20–21) of the JCQ guidance applies equally to Applied General and Tech Award qualifications. For ease of reference, the list is repeated here, with an additional bullet point relating to banked units.

Evidence may include:

- student work produced in response to assessment materials provided by AQA, including groups of questions, past papers or similar materials such as practice or sample papers:
- work for non-exam assessment (NEA) units, including the external assignment in Applied Business, even if this has not been fully completed (see further details below):
- student work produced in centre-devised tasks that reflect the specification, that follow the same format as AQA materials and have been marked in a way that reflects AQA mark schemes, including one or more of:
 - substantial classwork or homework (including work that took place during remote learning);
 - internal tests taken by students; and/or
 - mock exams taken over the course of study;
- in the Tech Award, records of a student's achievement over the course of study in performance-based work;
- records of a student's standard of work over the course of study;
- results of banked units which the student is not re-entering.

Students may have entered units in summer 2020 to count towards their award in summer 2021, but there are no results for those units. In Applied Generals, students may have banked results from January entries. In the Tech Award, as exams have not taken place since summer 2019, it is unlikely that students will have banked unit results.

As stated in the JCQ guidance, it is not necessary for every aspect of the specification to be assessed to arrive at a grade. In the context of Applied Generals and the Tech Award, this means that some units may have been covered more fully than others, even to the extent that there may be little evidence for one unit. The aim should be to include evidence that assesses the student's ability across a reasonable range of subject content reflecting, where possible, all assessment objectives in the Tech Award and the majority of assessment outcomes and performance outcomes in Applied Generals. When judging whether students have been taught sufficient content to form the basis for a grade, centres should judge sufficiency across the whole qualification and not for each unit individually.

In Applied Generals, the evidence must be drawn from the award which the student is entering. This means that evidence for a Certificate grade should be taken from Units 1–3 only, even if the student also has evidence for later units. For the Extended Certificate evidence should be drawn from all six units. If students' work for Units 1–3 is no longer available, records of marks awarded etc should be included in the evidence alongside an explanation of why the work which led to those marks is missing.

Page 24 of the JCQ guidance advises that the grade should be awarded based on a holistic judgement of a student's work. In Applied Generals and the Tech Award, it is not intended that teachers should grade each unit separately and then aggregate to arrive at an overall grade. However, some units will have grades attached to them – these will be banked units and any NEA units which the student has covered sufficiently to be marked and graded in the normal way. Further details are available in the next section and in the worked examples below.

Additional guidance for NEA units (centre assessed units and Unit 3, the external assignment, in Applied Business)

It is likely that most of the evidence relating to these units will be student work which would normally be submitted for formal assessment. Teachers should mark this work¹ according to the normal marking or grading criteria, taking account of any previously-published adaptations (see our information on [Applied General Business](#), [Applied General Science](#) and [Tech Award Performing Arts](#)).

Any changes to the marking or grading criteria which arise as a consequence of the previously-published adaptations can be found in the links given above. If a cohort, class or individual student has been unable to access some of the performance outcomes (or parts of performance outcomes) or areas of assessment because of disruption caused by the pandemic, these should be disregarded when the work is marked. For example, if criteria accounting for 5 of the 25 marks in an Applied General unit were inaccessible, the work should be marked out of 20 instead of 25 and grades assigned accordingly: Distinction at 80% of the maximum, Merit at 60% and Pass at 40% (Distinction* is awarded at qualification level but not at unit level – see the worked example for student 5A below). In Tech Award Performing Arts, please use the 2019 grade boundaries for Units 1 and 2, which are as follows:

Tech Award Performing Arts 2019 Units 1 and 2 grade boundaries

	Unit 1		Unit 2	
	Mark	% of max	Mark	% of max
Max	60		60	
L2 Dist. *	48	80	51	85
L2 Dist.	42	70	44	73
L2 Merit	36	60	37	62
L2 Pass	30	50	30	50
L1 Adv. Credit	23	38	24	40
L1 Credit	16	27	18	30

¹ Although Unit 3 in Applied Business is normally externally assessed, teachers should mark it this year, if the work is sufficiently complete.

Using data to support the grading process

All of the advice on pages 27–29 in the JCQ guidance applies equally to Applied Generals and the Tech Award. Centres should then compare, at qualification level, the profile of their results this year with the profile in previous years in which exams have taken place. As noted above, some units will have grades attached to them. If outcomes at qualification level are much higher than in previous years, or much lower, it may be helpful to compare the grade profile for those units with profiles in previous years.

As for A-level, AS and GCSE, grading judgements should not be driven by comparisons with previous years' results. These historical grade data should only be considered after grades have been provisionally assigned. It is the evidence of students' work that must form the basis for each student's grade.

Worked examples to assist with determining grades

The worked examples associated with the [JCQ guidance](#) should be consulted. The additional examples provided here take account of the larger amount of NEA in Applied Generals and the Tech Award than in most GCEs and GCSEs and take account of banked units.

The examples are labelled with Student 1A, 2A, 3A etc to distinguish them from the JCQ worked examples. The grade set is for Applied Generals, but exactly the same considerations should be used in the Tech Award, so the examples (except Student 5A) are equally relevant, although the grade set will be different.

Student 1A

Stage 1: The teacher considers what has been taught and what evidence is available across the whole class/cohort.

Stage 2: The teacher selects the evidence that has been collected over the course of study on a range of specification content. As well as assessments taken in controlled conditions, the teacher includes a classroom assessment and a homework task as they assess skills not assessed elsewhere. There are also the results from two banked units, which contribute towards the grade awarded to students who have not wished to re-take.

Stage 3: When evaluating the evidence, the teacher pays particular attention to students' performance in the assessments where there can be confidence that they have not received any support. The teacher therefore takes less account of the homework task, where they may have had assistance.

Stage 4: The teacher notes that Student 1A was entered to re-take the January 2020 banked external assessment in Summer 2020. There is no result for that re-take, because exams were cancelled, but the teacher takes less account of the January 2020 grade compared with other evidence, as that grade might have been superseded. The teacher also notes that additional assessment 1, taken in May, includes a section on a topic that this student missed for valid reasons. The teacher decides to discount that piece of evidence and sets another assessment instead. For Student 1A the evidence is as follows:

Evidence	Grade/Mark	Comments
Banked external assessment (Jan 20)	Pass	Was scheduled to re-enter in Summer 2020, so take less account of this result.
Banked internal assessment (Jan 21)	Distinction	
Homework task (Oct 20)	19/25	
Additional assessment 1 - AQA materials (May 21)	16/45	Replaced with another additional assessment from AQA; new mark = 27/45
Additional assessment 2 – AQA materials (May 21)	20/45	

Stage 5: The teacher uses the grade descriptors and exemplars to make a holistic grading judgement; the homework task and the classroom assessments are not graded individually. Taking all the evidence into account, following the Centre Policy, the teacher awards the student a Merit.

Student 2A

Stage 1: The teacher considers what has been taught and what evidence is available across the whole class/cohort. No students have banked units.

Stage 2: The teacher selects the evidence for the class/cohort that has been collected over the course of study on a range of specification content. The teacher doesn't have the physical evidence for the classroom assessment or the mock exam but has a record of the marks.

Stage 3: When evaluating the evidence, the teacher is confident that all pieces of evidence are authentically the student's work. The mock exam and NEA units have published grade boundaries so the teacher uses those boundaries to assign grades to those pieces.

Stage 4: The teacher knows that although the class was taught all the content in the assessments, this student has missed some teaching due to valid reasons. There are sections of the content required for the April 2021 NEA that the student was not taught. The teacher therefore removes that piece of evidence for the student. For Student 2A the evidence is as follows:

Evidence	Grade/Mark	Comments
Substantial Classroom assessment (Oct 20)	17/30	
Mock exam (Nov 20)	Merit	
NEA unit (unmoderated) (Feb 21)	Merit	
NEA unit (incomplete) (April 21)	Pass	Discount this piece
Additional assessment - AQA materials (May 21)	42/70	

Stage 5: The teacher uses the grade descriptors and exemplars to support a holistic judgement. Taking all the evidence into account, following the Centre Policy, the teacher decides to award a Merit.

Student 3A

Stage 1: The teacher considers what has been taught and what evidence is available across the whole class/cohort. No students have banked units.

Stage 2: The teacher selects the evidence for the class/cohort that has been collected over the course of study on a range of specification content. Because of the limited time available, students have only partially completed the second internal assessment, but the teacher uses the mark scheme and previous grade boundaries to estimate a notional grade for each student.

Stage 3: The teacher is confident that all the work is authentic. The NEA completed in the autumn would have been submitted for assessment and moderation in summer 2021 if exams had gone ahead. The teacher places more emphasis on the additional assessment provided by AQA (which covered the same skills as the written unit entered in Summer 2021) than on the earlier classroom performance marks.

Stage 4: The teacher is confident that the student has been taught all the content assessed in the tasks included. For Student 3A the evidence is as follows:

Evidence	Grade/Mark	Comments
NEA (completed but unmoderated) (Nov 20)	Merit	The student's mark was in the upper part of the Merit range.
Classroom assessments (Sept- Dec 20)	20/50	Average across several tasks
Partially completed NEA (March 21)	Distinction	
Additional assessment - AQA materials (May 21)	54/60	

Stage 5: The teacher uses the grade descriptors and exemplars to support a holistic judgement, and taking all the evidence into account, following the Centre Policy, the student is awarded a Distinction. Performance in recent assessments, combined with the high Merit in the NEA unit completed in November 2020, produced sufficient evidence for this grade, which was higher than the level achieved in the classroom assessments in autumn 2020.

Student 4A

Stage 1: The teacher considers what has been taught and what evidence is available across the whole class/cohort.

Stage 2: The teacher selects the evidence for the class/cohort that has been collected over the course of study on a range of specification content. Evidence which relates exclusively to the units with banked results is excluded, but the results are taken into account in making an overall judgement. However, some students would have re-taken one or more units if exams had gone ahead (and the centre has made entries for those units in summer 2021 as appropriate), so for those students the teacher uses some more recent evidence of performance in those units. The teacher is confident that all students were taught all of the content assessed in the tasks included.

Stage 3: The teacher is confident that Student 4A didn't have any additional support with the tasks completed

Stage 4: For Student 4A the evidence is as follows:

Evidence	Grade/Mark	Comments
Banked examined unit 1 (Jan 20)	U	Entered for re-take in Summer 2020 and again in Summer 2021, so discount this result
Banked NEA unit 2 (Jan 21)	U	Entered for re-take in Summer 2021, so discount this result.
Banked NEA unit 3 (Jan 21)	Merit	
Additional assessment 1 - AQA materials (May 21)	10/30	
Additional assessment 2 - AQA materials (May 21)	12/30	
NEA unit 2 for re-take (May 2021)	Pass	

Stage 5: The teacher uses the grade descriptors and exemplars to support a holistic judgement, and taking all the evidence into account, following the Centre Policy, the student is awarded a Pass.

Student 5A

This example is relevant to Applied Generals only.

Stage 1: The teacher considers what has been taught and what evidence is available across the whole class/cohort.

Stage 2: The teacher selects the evidence for the class/cohort that has been collected over the course of study on a range of specification content. Evidence which relates exclusively to the unit with banked results is excluded (provided that the student is not re-entered in Summer 2021). The teacher is confident that all students were taught all of the content assessed in the tasks included, except for NEA unit 2.

Stage 3: The teacher is confident that Student 5A didn't have any additional support with the tasks.

Stage 4: For Student 5A the evidence is as follows:

Evidence	Grade/Mark	Comments
Banked NEA unit 1 (Jan 21)	Distinction	
Additional assessment 1 - AQA materials (May 21)	25/30	
Additional assessment 2 - AQA materials (May 21)	24/30	
Partially completed NEA unit 2 (May 21)	Distinction	Marked and graded on the basis of the performance outcomes covered

Stage 5: The teacher uses the grade descriptors and exemplars to support a holistic judgement. The teacher considers whether Student 5A should be awarded Distinction* (Distinction star) but decides against it because the banked NEA unit and the partially completed NEA unit received 84% and 81% respectively of the maximum mark, which are in the lower part of the Distinction range (81% was 17/21, with the lower maximum of 21 occurring because not all parts of the task were accessible). Taking all the evidence into account, following the Centre Policy, the teacher awards the student a Distinction.