

Additional guidance on the determination of grades in Tech Level 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 where the process for Tech Levels differs, notably the need to supply grades at unit level instead of at qualification level. Centres must use the JCQ guidance as the main source of advice.

As summer 2021 is the final series for AQA's Tech Levels (apart from a re-sit series for the examined units in January 2022), all students will be completing a qualification. Centres should make entries for all constituent units for which the student does not already have a banked result, as well as any banked units which the student would have re-entered if exams had gone ahead.

Centres must submit grades for all units which the student is entering or re-entering in the summer 2021 series.

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 grades available are Distinction, Merit, Pass and Not Classified. We are not asking centres to award the Near Pass grade. The Distinction* (D*) grade (and, in larger qualifications, D*D* and D*D*D*) is awarded at qualification level only. For example, to be awarded D* in a four-unit qualification, students need at least three unit grades at Distinction and one at Merit. Qualification grades will be generated by AQA from the unit level grades. Teachers may wish to calculate those grades themselves (see section 'Using data to support the grading process' on the next page) but they are not to be submitted to AQA.

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 Tech Levels, this means that some units may have been covered more fully than others, even to the extent that there may be little evidence for a unit. Where possible, students should have covered the majority of assessment outcomes and performance outcomes in the qualification as a whole, and preferably, but not necessarily, for each unit individually.

If a cohort or individual student has covered few or none of the assessment outcomes or performance outcomes for a unit, teachers should identify evidence from other units which relates to similar knowledge, skills and understanding. Teachers may use that evidence to award a grade for the unit in question, provided that in their judgement the student or students have covered enough of the assessment outcomes and performance outcomes across the qualification as a whole to justify the award of a qualification grade. Records from units which a student has banked may be used for this purpose. The justification for awarding a unit grade must be documented where there is little student work available for the unit.

Examined units

For examined units, evidence may include:

- student work produced in response to assessment materials for the unit provided by AQA, including groups of questions, past papers or similar materials such as practice or sample papers;
- student work produced in centre-devised tasks that reflect the unit, 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;
- records of a student's standard of work on the unit over the course of study.

Externally set and assessed units (other than examined units) and internally assessed units

For externally set and assessed units (other than examined units) and for internally assessed units, the evidence should usually be the work, complete or incomplete, which would normally be submitted for formal assessment. This could include witness testimonies or teacher observation records in a form which would normally be submitted for assessment, as well as records of a student's standard of work on the unit over the course of study.

Teachers must take account of the previously published adaptations in Engineering (see our 'Changes for 2021' pages for [Engineering: Mechatronics](#) and [Engineering: Design](#)). There were no adaptations elsewhere.

Using data to support the grading process

This part of the supplementary guidance should be read in conjunction with the corresponding section in the JCQ guidance (pages 27–29).

For examined units and for other externally set and marked units, centres should compare the profile of their students' proposed results for the summer 2021 exam series with the profile in previous years in which exams have taken place. Similar comparisons should also be made for internally assessed units if it is possible to identify equivalent cohorts in previous years. Where feasible, unit results should be aggregated to a qualification grade, in the way described in the specification, and the qualification grade profiles compared with those for equivalent cohorts in previous years.

As for A-level, AS and GCSE, Tech Level 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. However, if outcomes are much higher than in previous years, or much lower, either for a unit or for an overall qualification, the reasons should be considered and grades should be reviewed if necessary.

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 unit level grading in Tech Levels.

The examples are labelled with Student 1T, 2T, 3T etc to distinguish them from the JCQ worked examples. The examples for students 1T and 2T relate to examined units while those for students 3T, 4T and 5T relate to externally set and assessed units (other than examined units) and to centre assessed units.

Student 1T

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

Stage 2: The teacher selects the evidence relating to this unit that has been collected over the course of study. As well as assessments taken in controlled conditions, the teacher includes a substantial homework task as it assesses skills not assessed elsewhere.

Stage 3: When evaluating the evidence, the teacher is confident that students have not received any support in the additional AQA assessments and pays particular attention to their performance in these. The teacher takes less account of the homework task, where students may have had assistance.

Stage 4: The teacher notes that additional assessment 1, taken in April, includes a section on a topic that Student 1T missed for valid reasons. The teacher decides to discount that piece of evidence and sets the student another assessment instead. The evidence for Student 1T is as follows:

Evidence	Grade/Mark	Comments
Homework task (Oct 20)	19/25	
Additional assessment 1 - AQA materials (April 21)	8/30	Replaced with another additional assessment from AQA; new mark = 15/30
Additional assessment 2 – AQA materials (May 21)	18/30	

Stage 5: The teacher uses the grade descriptors to make a grading judgement for this unit but does not attempt to grade the homework task or the classroom assessments individually. Taking all the evidence into account, following the Centre Policy, the teacher awards Student 1T a Merit.

Student 2T

Stage 1: The teacher is aware that because of the disruption only a small part of this examined unit has been taught and there is little evidence for any students in the cohort.

Stage 2: The teacher selects the limited evidence which is available. There is just one substantial homework task and there are no classroom assessments. The teacher therefore also refers to relevant evidence from other units where similar skills are covered.

Stage 3: When evaluating the evidence, the teacher refers to the aspects from the other units which are most closely related to the unit being graded.

Stage 4: Student 2T has been no more or less disadvantaged than other students in the cohort. The teacher judges that there is sufficient evidence for the qualification as a whole to award a grade for this unit. For Student 2T the evidence used to grade this unit is as follows:

Evidence	Grade/Mark	Comments
Substantial homework task on this unit (Oct 20)	25/30	
Banked unit covering some similar skills	Distinction	
Substantial homework task on a different unit covering some similar skills	21/30	

Stage 5: The teacher uses the grade descriptors to support a holistic judgement for the unit. Taking all the evidence into account, following the Centre Policy, the teacher decides to award a Distinction to Student 2T.

Student 3T

Stage 1: The teacher considers what has been taught and completed for this non-examined externally set unit and what evidence is available across the whole class/cohort.

Stage 2: The teacher decides that the best evidence for grading purposes is the work which students would normally have submitted for formal assessment. Most students have completed this work and for the rest it is almost complete.

Stage 3: Although there is no formal authentication process this summer, the teacher is confident that the work for this unit is students' own.

Stage 4: The teacher is confident that Student 3T has been taught all the material needed for the unit.

Stage 5: The teacher uses the grading criteria in the specification and decides to award a Distinction. However, when comparing the unit's grade profile with previous years, it is evident that the proportion of high grades is much greater this year than in previous years. The teacher therefore reviews the grading judgements for all students and decides on reflection that Student 3T should be awarded a Merit.

Students 4T and 5T

Stage 1: The teacher considers what has been taught and completed for this centre assessed unit. Most of the material was covered last autumn and students were intending to submit their work for formal assessment in the spring. Because of varying home circumstances some students completed the task while others were unable to do so.

Stage 2: The main evidence is the work (complete or incomplete) which would normally be submitted for formal assessment. However, the teacher also selects other evidence, partly because students may have received additional assistance when working at home and partly because some students' formal work is incomplete.

Stage 3: The teacher informs students of the range of evidence that is going to be used and explains that the grade cannot be awarded solely on the basis of the work normally submitted for assessment because it was not carried out under the required conditions.

Stage 4: Student 4T's work for formal assessment was very incomplete but Student 5T's was finished. For Students 4T and 5T the evidence is as follows:

Evidence	Student 4T grade/mark	Student 5T grade/mark	Comments
Work on the unit which would normally be presented for formal assessment	Pass	Distinction	Not carried out under the required conditions. Also, very incomplete for student4T so difficult to award a grade
Classroom task 1 (autumn 2020)	24/30	24/30	
Classroom task 2 (autumn 2020)	20/30	16/30	

Stage 5: The teacher uses the grade descriptors to support the judgement, and taking all the evidence into account, following the Centre Policy, awards both students a Merit for this unit.