



Requirements for Adapting assessments for GQ Qualifications (GCSE, GCE and Welsh Baccalaureate Skills Challenge Certificate) in 2021



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REGULATORY DOCUMENT

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Version history

Version 2 of our Requirements for Adapting assessments for GQ Qualifications (GCSE, GCE and Welsh Baccalaureate Skills Challenge Certificate) in 2021 was published on 6 August 2020.

This version was updated on 18 December 2020 to reflect Qualifications Wales Board's decision to regulate Approved GCSE and GCE qualifications in line with the policy approach adopted by the Welsh Government as articulated in the Ministerial Direction and the recommendations of the Design and Delivery Group (DDAG) as set out in their consensus document. This version includes additional principles which WJEC are required to comply with when making Adaptations to assessments for GQ Qualifications in 2021.

This document is available in [Welsh](#).

Feedback on this document is welcomed at any time. Please send any comments to policy@qualificationswales.org

1 Introduction

On 18 March 2020, to help fight the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) the Education Minister for Wales announced the closure of schools¹ and the cancellation of the 2020 summer exam series².

We published our decisions³ around the arrangements for the summer 2020 exam series on 29 June 2020.

While decisions we've had to make about exams this summer have related to qualifications that year 11 and year 13 learners were sitting, as schools and colleges return and start planning for September, we know that clarity on qualifications for the next academic year is needed.

We know that current year 10 and 12 learners have already lost around 4 months of classroom time in 2020, and it seems likely that teaching and learning will remain disrupted beyond September – whether this be through constraints on school capacity as a consequence of social distancing or other interventions to address further outbreaks of Covid-19.

We also know that learners in year 10 and year 12 feel worried about their GCSE and A Level courses and how they will cover their programmes of study to achieve their full potential in summer 2021. Understandably teachers and lecturers share these concerns and want to do their best for their learners.

Our aim in proposing changes to assessment arrangements for learners taking their exams in summer 2021 is to support learners who have lost some face to face teaching time and to help centres manage any on-going public health safeguards, while ensuring the qualifications remain valid and meaningful.

Addressing many of the risks impacting on qualifications and assessments is outside our scope as the independent regulator. We are working closely with our partners, including WJEC, other qualifications regulators and Welsh Government to deliver a coordinated system wide approach to maintaining standards, minimising burden and mitigating risk to disadvantage to learners. This will continue throughout the delivery and award of these assessments and qualifications in 2021.

Having considered the policy positions that informed our arrangements for spring and summer 2020, the likely ongoing coronavirus disruption to teaching and learning, our principal aims and sector feedback, we will structure our regulatory approach around a set of overarching principles that WJEC should apply when adapting assessments for 2021, and more detailed requirements

¹ Welsh Government (2020) Statement from Minister for Education, Kirsty Williams on school closures in Wales - <https://www.qualificationswales.org/english/coronavirus---covid-19/welsh-government-statements/statement-from-minister-for-education-kirsty-williams-on-school-closures-in-wales---18-march-2020/>

² Welsh Government (2020) Written statement on summer examinations 2020 - <https://gov.wales/writtenstatement-written-statement-summer-examinations-2020>

³ <https://www.qualificationswales.org/english/coronavirus---covid-19/summer-2020-decisions/>

that WJEC must comply with when making those adaptations. These are outlined in sections 3 and 4 of this document.

2 Background

Schedule 3, Section 4 of the Qualifications Wales Act 2015 allows us to place special conditions to which awarding body's recognition may be subject. Special conditions may make different provision for different purposes, including among other things by reference to different qualifications or descriptions of qualification, and different circumstances in which a qualification is awarded.

This document sets out the principles to be applied by WJEC when Adapting assessments for GQ Qualifications in 2021. It also sets out our requirements in relation to Adapting assessments for those GQ Qualifications. We will monitor WJEC's compliance in accordance with our [Regulatory Framework and Approach](#).

The principles and requirements included within this document apply in addition to the requirements imposed by the Standard Conditions of Recognition, any relevant Qualification Level Conditions any other Regulatory Document⁴.

To the extent that there is any inconsistency between a requirement in this document, and a requirement included within any Approval Criteria published by Qualifications Wales, such that WJEC could not comply with both such requirements, it must comply with the requirement of this document and is not obliged to comply with the Approval Criteria.

In this Regulatory Document, the following words shall have the meaning given to them below (and cognate expressions should be construed accordingly) –

Adaptations

Any changes made by WJEC to the design, setting, delivery or marking of an assessment for a GQ Qualification that it makes available.

GQ Qualification

A qualification which is any of the following –

- (a) Approved GCSE qualifications;
- (b) Approved GCE AS qualifications;
- (c) Approved GCE A level qualifications;
- (d) Welsh Baccalaureate Skills Challenge Certificate (SCC) qualifications, and

⁴ A regulatory document, or part of a regulatory document, document which features in a document entitled the 'Regulatory Document List', which may be published by Qualifications Wales and may be varied and replaced by Qualifications Wales from time to time.

- (e) Legacy GCSE, GCE AS and GCE A level qualifications which are only available to Learners in Wales⁵.

This Regulatory Document came into effect on 15 July 2020 and will remain in force until such date as specified or determined by Qualifications Wales.

⁵ WJEC Level 1/Level 2 GCSE in Information and Communication Technology, WJEC Level 1/Level 2 GCSE in Information and Communication Technology (Short Course), WJEC Level 1/Level 2 GCSE in Health and Social Care, WJEC Level 1/Level 2 GCSE in Health and Social Care (Double Award), WJEC Level 1/Level 2 GCSE in Home Economics: Child Development, WJEC Level 3 Advanced GCE in Applied ICT, WJEC Level 3 Advanced GCE in ICT, WJEC Level 3 Advanced Subsidiary GCE in Applied ICT, WJEC Level 3 Advanced Subsidiary GCE in ICT, WJEC Level 3 Advanced Subsidiary GCE in Health and Social Care (Double Award), WJEC Level 3 Advanced GCE in Health and Social Care (Double Award), WJEC Level 3 Advanced Subsidiary GCE in Health and Social Care and WJEC Level 3 Advanced GCE in Health and Social Care.

3 Principles to be applied

Special Condition WJEC2 allows us to specify principles with which WJEC must comply in Adapting assessments for GQ Qualifications, as well as the balance to be achieved when those principles conflict. We set out the principles, and the balance to be achieved between them, for the purposes of Special Condition WJEC1 below.

The Principles

- Principle 1** – WJEC must seek to ensure that Learners are not advantaged or disadvantaged relative to their peers in other jurisdictions.
- Principle 2** – WJEC must seek to ensure that all qualifications are a reliable indication of the knowledge, skills and understanding specified in the qualification following any Adaptations to assessments.
- Principle 3** – WJEC must seek to ensure that qualification content, in general, is not reduced; however, content can be restructured so it can reasonably be streamlined, such as in relation to optional units.
- Principle 4** – WJEC must seek to ensure that the Manageability of assessment is maximised, where this will allow for an increase in teaching time in order to minimise the impact on outcomes.
- Principle 5** – WJEC must seek to maintain standards, as far as possible, within the same qualification in line with previous years.
- Principle 6** – WJEC must seek to maintain standards, as far as possible, across similar qualifications made available by WJEC and by other awarding bodies.
- Principle 7** – WJEC must seek to ensure that flexibility in the delivery of assessments is maximised so as to reduce the impact of disruption, illness or quarantine, including lockdown at a local level.

Following the Qualifications Wales Board's decision on 15 December 2020 to regulate Approved GCSE and GCE qualifications in line with the policy approach adopted by the Welsh Government as articulated in the Ministerial Direction, and the recommendations of the Design and Delivery Group (DDAG) as set out in their consensus document, WJEC must also comply with the following principles in making further Adaptations to assessments for GQ

- Principle 8** – WJEC must seek to reflect, as appropriate, in each GQ Qualification, some or all of the units (non examination assessment, internal assessment and external assessment), in its approach to assessing GQ Qualifications.
- Principle 9** – WJEC must seek to ensure that where a GQ Qualification contains a non examination assessment unit, it continues as planned, including any Adaptations made for summer 2021.
- Principle 10** – WJEC must seek to ensure that the internal assessment unit uses assessment material provided by WJEC based upon past papers, to reduce administrative burden and ensure equity of assessment experience. Where appropriate, the assessment material should be Adapted to align with Adaptations published in September 2020.
- Principle 11** – WJEC must seek to ensure that advance notification of content areas for the external assessment unit, either to be included or excluded, is provided for in a timely manner.
- Principle 12** – WJEC must seek to enable Teachers to exercise professional judgement as to how and when the internal and external assessment units are delivered within pre-determined assessment windows, so that they can be embedded in teaching and learning plans and Learners' preparation can be supported.
- Principle 13** – WJEC must seek to ensure that marks awarded for each relevant unit are used to determine the final grade that Learners are awarded.

The balance between the principles

These principles are not arranged in a hierarchy. However, in any case where there is a conflict between two or more principles such that compliance with one principle will reduce the degree to which WJEC can comply with another, it must strike an appropriate balance between –

- (a) maintaining the Validity of the qualification, and
- (b) making Adaptations to assessments in order to minimise the impact on Learners during the Covid-19 pandemic in line with the principles set out in this Regulatory Document.

4 Requirements in relation to the Adaptation of assessments for GQ Qualifications in 2021

Special Condition WJEC3 allows us to specify requirements and guidance in relation to the Adaptation of assessments for GQ Qualifications in spring and summer 2021.

We set out our requirements in relation to the Adaptation of assessments in spring and summer 2021 for GQ Qualifications below.

General requirements in relation to Adaptations

Adaptations may only be made to the scheme of assessment for GQ Qualifications relating to:

- examination assessments, and
- non-examination assessments (NEA).

The primary aim when making any Adaptations should be to minimise the burden of assessment on Teachers and Learners.

When making any Adaptations to assessments (examination assessments and NEA), WJEC must take account of the latest government and public health guidance.

Where possible, to maintain Comparability across subjects, Adaptations of any type should be similar in scale and design (but not necessarily identical) for groups of similar qualifications.

It is expected that most qualifications can be Adapted within the requirements set out below. In this knowledge, a rationale for any Adaptations made to an assessment, and the extent to which they are made for each qualification within these requirements, must be recorded by WJEC and submitted to Qualifications Wales upon request.

Where it is not possible to Adapt a qualification(s) within these requirements, this will be treated as an exceptional case. As such, a rationale for any Adaptations made to an assessment outside of these requirements must be recorded by WJEC and submitted to Qualifications Wales for approval.

Equalities Considerations

WJEC must ensure that in making any Adaptations to an assessment for a GQ Qualification which it makes available it Minimises Bias, as far as possible.

In all cases, WJEC must comply with the requirements of Condition C2.3(h) (Arrangements with Centres), Condition D2 (Accessibility of qualifications) and Condition G6 (Arrangements for Reasonable Adjustments).

Adaptation of assessments for GCSE Qualifications

(a) Adaptations to examination assessment

When making any Adaptations to the examination assessment of the qualifications, WJEC must ensure that:

- the Validity and Reliability of the qualification is not undermined by those Adaptations;
- all assessment objectives are assessed across the qualification;
- wherever possible, the balance of assessment objectives is maintained. Where it is not possible to maintain the balance of assessment objective weightings, the Adaptations should not alter the Level of Demand of the qualification, and
- assessments target the full grade range of the qualification.

(b) Adaptations to NEA

When making any Adaptations to the NEA units, WJEC must consider the particular skills being assessed and the importance of those skills to the Validity of the qualification.

WJEC is permitted, but not required, to make the following changes where it is deemed appropriate and does not undermine the Validity and Reliability of the qualification:

- Adapt the conditions and controls associated with an assessment where it is considered that to do so would reduce the burden of assessment for Learners and reduce the likelihood of Learners being disadvantaged, and
- Adapt the duration of the assessment and the scheduled dates for the assessment to be completed, where to do so may reduce the likelihood of any potential disadvantage for Learners.

Adaptation of assessments to GCE Qualifications

When making any Adaptations to GCE Qualifications, WJEC must give due regard to proposals for Adaptations to AS and A level qualifications in other jurisdictions, with the aim of maintaining parity and portability of the qualifications.

(a) Adaptations to examination assessment

When making any Adaptations to the examination assessment, WJEC must ensure that:

- the Validity and Reliability of the qualifications is not undermined by those Adaptations;
- all assessment objectives are assessed across the qualification;

- wherever possible, the balance of assessment objectives is maintained. Where it is not possible to maintain the balance of assessment objective weightings, the Adaptations should not alter the Level of Demand of the qualification, and
- assessments target the full grade range of the qualification, and
- content and skills which are considered important for progression to higher education are retained.

(b) Adaptations to NEA

When making any Adaptations to the NEA units, WJEC must consider the particular skills being assessed and the importance of those skills to the Validity of the qualification.

WJEC is permitted, but not required, to make the following changes where it is deemed appropriate and does not undermine the Validity and Reliability of the qualification:

- Adapt the conditions and controls associated with an assessment where it is considered that to do so would reduce the burden of assessment for Learners and reduce the likelihood of Learners being disadvantaged, and
- Adapt the duration of the assessment and the scheduled dates for the assessment to be completed, where to do so may reduce the likelihood of any potential disadvantage for Learners.

Adaptation of assessments to Welsh Baccalaureate Skills Challenge Certificate Qualifications

When making any Adaptations to Welsh Baccalaureate Skills Challenge Certificate Qualifications, WJEC must ensure that:

- the Validity and Reliability of the qualifications is not undermined by those Adaptations;
- all skills are explicitly assessed across the qualification;
- wherever possible, the balance of assessment of the skills is maintained. Where it is not possible to maintain the balance of weightings, the Adaptations should not alter the Level of Demand of the qualification, and
- assessments target the full grade range of the qualification.