



Hinckley

ACADEMY

BTEC Centre Policy for Q-TAGs

Date of last review:	October 2021
Reviewed by:	Miss Ami Radcliffe, BTEC Co-ordinator and Ms Azizah Pathan, Vice Principal
Frequency of review:	Annually
Date of next review:	October 2022

All centres will be required to confirm their adherence to this policy via the Q-TAG submission and Head of Centre Declaration process this year.

It is essential you follow the guidance and steps outlined below, and existing BTEC policies for Quality Assurance.

Aims of this Policy:

1. To make it clear the steps all centres must take to ensure that the Q-TAGs they determine for their learners are sufficiently valid and reliable a centre must: Review the specification grading information i.e.. unit-level assessment criteria and grade descriptors with the subject teaching team Consider what evidence you will have from the content you have taught Collect the evidence Evaluate the quality of the evidence Assign a Qualification-Level Teacher Assessed Grade (Q-TAG) Reflect on your judgement before submission Further detail in relation to the above steps must be referred to and is available in our guidance, here, with supporting information on our webpage: quals.pearson.com/BTEC2021assessment
2. To ensure that learners can feel confident in the process their centres have taken to determine their Q-TAG.
3. To summarise the existing BTEC policies, and confirm that they now also apply in the context of Q-TAG judgements.
4. To reflect and incorporate Ofqual's Vocational Contingency Regulatory Framework (VCRF) and Guidance that any Q-TAG is based on appropriate sources of evidence and has gone through an internal quality assurance process (which includes final sense check of outcomes against historical centre outcomes).
5. To ensure that the methodology used to determine the Q-TAG is consistent across centres and sufficiently valid, reliable and does not advantage or disadvantage any group of, or individual, learners.

In order to do this the centre will, for each qualification and learner, submit a Q-TAG and Head of Centre Declaration confirming that they have:

1. Ensured that all relevant teaching staff (i.e. Assessors, Internal Verifiers, Heads of Department and Heads of Centre) will use the guidance provided by Pearson to confirm the Q-TAG, and refer to supplementary guidance from JCQ and Ofqual where required.
2. Ensured that the evidence that has been used for each Q-TAG judgement is sufficiently documented to ensure that it can be explained to the learner or Parent or Carer in the case of Appeals, and to Pearson. Centres must take into account previous years' results, if there is a material difference in the results profile expected in 2021, a Centre must be able to explain why its results are significantly out of line with past performance (be that higher or lower).
3. Ensured that all assessment evidence is retained in line with Ofqual's Vocational Contingency Regulatory Framework (evidence which is used to support the Qualification-Level Teacher Assessed Grade should be retained until 6 months after the date of the issue of the result, or the conclusion of any appeal in relation to that result, whichever is later). In some cases, evidence may no longer be available, JCQ has released guidance on the retention of evidence in these circumstances. Evidence must be made available for the purposes of further external quality assurance or an Appeal.

This will include documentation that demonstrates the above process for the Q-TAG judgement has been followed, i.e.:

- Records of Standardisation of Assessors and Internal Verifiers and other relevant members of staff, in relation to the Q-TAG process and holistic judgements
- Evidence sheets for learners (Existing BTEC templates for actual assessment and Pearson will provide a template for documenting alternative evidence)
- The alternative sources of evidence that have been considered
- Any additional Assessment and Internal Verification materials
- Any assessed learner work assessment records
- Records of performance data used for sense check, with explanation for any deviation in the 2021 Q-TAG judgements (if there is a material difference in the profiles expected in 2021).

4. Ensured they follow all other policies as set out in our Pearson Annual Centre Declaration signed in 2021, including Pearson Terms and Conditions.

What will Standards Verification involve this year?

The Standards Verification process this year has a different core purpose and is designed to support centres and assessors in awarding grades. It will offer guidance, support, and areas where processes can be developed in order to shape parity across centres.

BTEC is made up of a large proportion of internal assessment, because of this, and in parallel to producing some more specific guidance around arriving at Q-TAG grades we have taken the decision to turn our standards verification process into a clear touch point to support you through the process.

We have therefore reduced the amount of material that we would like to review, and also have introduced some flexibility of what that evidence looks like (could include partially completed work). It will enable us to have an earlier interaction with you on assessment judgements that you are making on a subset of the qualification to have some confidence that you are likely to be making good judgements at the point of Q-TAG submission. We intend to use the outputs of this process to inform, in part, the sampling of Q-TAGs later in the year (July).

Ofqual guidance states that all qualifications issued this year will need to be Quality Assured.

- The process for BTEC quality assurance is well established and our approach will be to continue working with you collaboratively to support this requirement.
- To fulfil the requirements on quality assurance, Standards Verification will continue in a different format and with a different core purpose this year - to support the Q-TAG process.
- To reflect the change of purpose, only three learners from one unit will be selected for review*

What will Standards Verifiers (SVs) be able to do?

- SVs will be providing feedback on teacher unit-level assessment only.
- This feedback can be used to support centres to ascertain their accuracy in the application of unit-level criteria.

- SVs are able to provide both sector specific expertise relating to internal assessment, and support for centres on the application of unit-level standards.

- SVs will not be advising centres on their Qualification-level Teacher Assessed Grades, as these judgements will have to take into account other forms of evidence.

Other ways in which your Standards Verifier (SV) can support you:

- Discuss any reduced assessment options and possible adaptations available for the programme •

Review assessment plans

- Share good practice in delivery and assessment activities

- Offer advice on alternative resources and approaches to content delivery • Suggest alternative approaches when gathering assessment evidence

- Provide feedback on assignment briefs, assessment decisions and internal verification

Final Pearson QA of Q-TAGs submitted

The timelines for the post-submission Q-TAG QA will be aligned with General Qualifications and will run from June through to July. In exceptional circumstances this may run until end of July.

This final stage of the quality assurance process is to confirm that centres have implemented the policies set out by Pearson for the Q-TAG and that their submitted grades reflect this. The sampling process will provide confidence that the grades awarded by Pearson command assurance.

The sampling process will take place following the submission of grades by centres. Targeted sampling will be informed by a range of factors including:

- Whether the centre has submitted the Annual Centre Declaration;
- Whether the centre has submitted their policies for review as part of LSV QA
- Late registration patterns outside of normal behaviour
- Where a centre's overall results profile for this year's cohort appears to diverge significantly compared to the profiles for cohorts from previous years (when exams have taken place);
- The Standards Verification activity from this year.

In addition, random sampling will ensure appropriate sector/qualification, geographical and 'centre-type' coverage.

Sampling after the submission of grades will involve a review of evidence at qualification and sector level by subject specialists. The sampling process will help ensure that centres have implemented the Pearson guidance and the internal quality assurance for determination of grades were followed, without placing an unreasonable administrative burden on the centre being sampled. Pearson will decide whether to accept the grades submitted by centres or undertake further review. This may lead to the withholding of results.

Centres are expected to work with Pearson during the quality assurance process. Failure to engage may jeopardise the timely issue of results to learners, and may lead to undertaking further investigation (see Malpractice section)

Malpractice Pearson greatly appreciates all of the hard work that centres will undertake in setting out and implementing their processes to determine grades. Centres are required to submit grades that have been determined in line with published guidance and their own Centre Policy.

The decision to not go ahead with exams in Summer 2021 means that the causes and drivers for malpractice will be different to those in a normal examination series. However, malpractice can still occur through genuine error or intent, particularly around the determination of grades. A minority of centre staff may fail to appropriately adhere to the guidance in determining grades and some students might attempt to gain an unfair advantage.

To support centres in these challenging times we have set out below some of the circumstances in which Pearson will investigate potential malpractice concerns. Please note that the list is not intended to be exhaustive and there may be other instances of potential malpractice which will require investigation.

Centres/centre staff Pearson's Investigations team will investigate credible allegations of malpractice or issues reported from our monitoring processes that raise concerns about a failure to follow the published requirements for determining grades.

Examples include:

- Registrations are made for learners who had not studied the course of entry or had not intended to certificate in summer 2021.
- Grades created for learners who have not been taught sufficient content to provide the basis for that grade.
- A teacher deliberately and inappropriately disregarding the centre's published policy when determining grades.
- A teacher fabricating evidence of learner performance to support an inflated grade.
- A teacher deliberately providing inappropriate levels of support before or during an assessment, including deliberate disclosure of mark schemes and assessment materials, to support an inflated grade.
- A teacher intentionally submitting inflated grades.
- A failure to retain evidence used in the determination of grades in accordance with the Pearson grading guidance.
- A systemic failure to follow the centre's policy in relation to the application of Reasonable Adjustments, Access Arrangements or Special Consideration arrangements for learners in relation to assessments used to determine grades.
- A failure to take reasonable steps to authenticate learner work.
- A failure to appropriately manage Conflicts of Interest (COIs) within a centre.
- A Head of Centre's failure to submit the required declaration when submitting their grades.
- Grades being released to learners (or their parents/carers) before the issue of results.
- Failure to cooperate with Pearson's quality assurance, appeal or investigation processes.
- Failure to conduct a centre review or submit an appeal when requested to do so by a student.

Centres which identify such incidents should report them to our Investigations team by completing a JCQ M2 form (<https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/malpractice/>) and submitting this and any relevant evidence to pqsmalpractice@pearson.com.

Learners It is possible that some learners may attempt to influence their teachers' judgements about their grades.

Learners might attempt to gain an unfair advantage during the centre's process by, for example, submitting fabricated evidence or plagiarised work. Such incidents would constitute malpractice and centres are asked to report these to Pearson in the normal way using the JCQ M1 form (<https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/malpractice/>) and emailing this and supporting information to candidatemalpractice@pearson.com.

Learners, or individuals acting on their behalf such as parents/carers, might also try to influence grade decisions by applying pressure to centres or their staff. We anticipate that the majority of such instances will be dealt with by the centre internally – in such cases, we ask that the centres retain clear

and reliable records of the circumstances and the steps taken, and that learners are made aware of the outcome. However, if a learner continues to inappropriately attempt to pressure centre staff then please inform the candidate malpractice investigations team using the JCQ M1 Form. We will contact your centre if we receive credible allegations that such pressure has been applied in order that appropriate steps can be taken.

In all the scenarios listed above, as well as any others that have not been explicitly identified here, the JCQ Suspected Malpractice Policies and Procedures 2020-2021 (https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Malpractice_20-21_v2-1.pdf) continues to apply. Please be aware that, as always, all investigations into alleged malpractice remain confidential and the findings, including any sanctions imposed, are not publicly disclosed.

Should you have any questions or concerns regarding malpractice, please contact the Investigations team via pqsmalpractice@pearson.com.