

PTQ Grade Estimation

Technical Certificate and Technical Level
Qualifications

Grade Estimation Centre Guidance

Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Mitigation approaches.....	4
3. Identifying Performance Table Qualifications	5
4. Timelines.....	6
5. Overview of process	7
6. Phase One – data collection of learner profiles	8
6.1. Learner profiles	8
6.2. Resitting learners	9
6.3. Registration of additional learners	9
7. Phase Two – grade estimation.....	10
7.1. Principles for grade estimation	10
7.2. Minimum threshold of evidence.....	10
7.3. Banked assessment components.....	10
7.4. Teacher judgement	11
7.5. Reasonable adjustments.....	11
7.6. Equalities and protected characteristics.....	11
7.7. Trusted sources of evidence	11
7.8. Rank order.....	12
7.9. Centre declaration	12
7.10. Sharing data with learners, parents and carers.....	12
8. Phase Two – submitting data to VTCT	13
9. Standardisation and Quality Assurance.....	13
9.1. External quality assurance activity.....	13
9.2. Requirement for extra evidence	13
9.3. Analysis of data	13
10. Issuing of results and certificate claims	14
11. Appeals.....	14
12. Contingency windows	14
13. Further advice and guidance.....	14

1. Introduction

In a few short weeks, life and the educational landscape have been completely changed by Covid-19. VTCT understands completely the difficulties and disruption this has caused to you, your learners and your staff. We want to ensure that we are doing everything we can to support you and your learners through this time.

Our website www.vtct.org.uk contains information and guidance aligned with the latest UK Government, Regulatory and World Health Organisation (WHO) official advice.

On 9th April 2020, Ofqual recognised the complexity of the landscape for vocational and technical qualifications and stated a single approach is not appropriate. Ofqual proposed a new “extraordinary regulatory framework” to let awarding organisations deliver results “using approaches that would not be allowed in ordinary circumstances”. It will be based on “key principles”, (Ofqual, April 2020) and requires awarding organisations to:

- Issue results to as many learners as possible
- Ensure that each result issued is sufficiently reliable and valid
- Maintain standards, as far as possible, within the same qualification in line with previous years
- Maintain standards, as far as possible, across similar VTCT qualifications and other similar qualifications made available by other awarding organisations

The framework covers vocational and technical qualifications and any general qualifications which are not covered by the Government’s separate plan for GCSEs and A-levels. The learners in scope for the framework are those due to receive results between March and the end of July 2020.

Guidance has been published by Ofqual for all qualifications to be awarded and graded in summer 2020. For more information in regards to Ofqual guidelines please follow the link:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofqual>.

Awarding organisations were required by Ofqual to categorise their qualifications according to their purpose.

The range of qualifications in scope includes:

- Qualifications from Entry level to level 6
- Those approved for public funding and delivery, irrespective of the age of the learner
- Those qualifications which are not A Levels, AS levels, GCSEs, EPAs and AEA
- Functional skills – legacy qualification end date has been extended until December 2020

The purpose of the qualifications would then influence the mitigation approach that would be implemented. The three categories of qualification are:

- Qualifications where the primary focus is progression to HE/FE
- Qualifications where there is a dual-mixed purpose (progression and licence to practise)
- Qualifications where their primary use is licence to practise or occupational competency

2. Mitigation approaches

VTCT has been working closely with our regulators, to ensure the most appropriate way forward is in place for learners to progress with their vocational and technical qualifications. VTCT has been working through each of the qualifications in our portfolio and aligning them to a mitigation approach. The approach to awarding will depend on the qualification's primary purpose. See figure 1 below.

Figure 1



Awarding organisations were instructed by Ofqual to select a mitigation approach based on the following principles:

Qualifications where the primary focus is progression to HE/FE

For qualifications used for progression to further or higher education, it is government policy that, as far as possible, qualifications in this category should be treated in the same way as GCSEs, AS and A levels, with learners receiving a calculated result.

Qualifications where there is a dual-mixed purpose (progression and licence to practise)

For those qualifications with a mixed purpose, awarding organisations needed to consider the primary purpose of each of their qualifications. If it more closely aligns with the primary purpose of supporting progression to further or higher education, then the starting point would be a calculated result, in line with qualifications in the first category, with an adapted assessment potentially being made available where this is not possible. If the qualification is more closely aligned with signifying occupational competence, then the starting point should be the provision of adapted assessments. The postponement of assessments, leading to a delay to results, should be a last resort.

Qualifications where their primary use is licence to practise or occupational competency

For qualifications which are used to signal occupational competence, Ofqual recognises that it would not be suitable for learners to receive a calculated result. This is because it would not be clear that a learner possesses the skills required by the role to which the qualification relates, or does not meet the standards set by professional bodies or regulations. This could have health and safety implications.

3. Identifying Performance Table Qualifications

VTCT has identified that our performance table qualifications (PTQs) are appropriate for the estimation mitigation approach. This guidance document is specifically to support centres in estimating centre grades for the qualifications indicated below:

Product code	Qualification title
Technical Certificates	
BT2D1.ED1	VTCT Level 2 Diploma/Extended Diploma in Beauty Therapy
BT2D2	VTCT Level 2 Diploma in Beauty Counter Consultancy
BT2D3	VTCT Level 2 Diploma in Nail Technology (Gel)
BT2D4	VTCT Level 2 Diploma in Nail Technology (Liquid and Powder)
BT2D5	VTCT Level 2 Diploma in Hair and Make-up Artistry
BT2D6	VTCT Level 2 Diploma for Beauticians
HB2D1.ED1	VTCT Level 2 Diploma/Extended Diploma in Ladies Hairdressing
HB2D2.ED2	VTCT Level 2 Diploma/Extended Diploma in Barbering
HC2D6	VTCT Level 2 Diploma in Professional Cookery
HC2D7	VTCT Level 2 Diploma in Bakery and Patisserie
HC2D8	VTCT Level 2 Diploma in Food and Beverage Service
HC2D9	VTCT Level 2 Diploma in General Catering Skills
Technical Level Qualifications	
BT3D1.ED1	VTCT Level 3 Diploma/Extended Diploma in Massage Therapies
BT3D2.ED2	VTCT Level 3 Diploma/Extended Diploma in Spa Therapy
BT3D3.ED3	VTCT Level 3 Diploma/Extended Diploma in Beauty Make-up Techniques
BT3D4.ED4	VTCT Level 3 Diploma/Extended Diploma in Beauty Therapy
BT3D5.ED5	VTCT Level 3 Diploma/Extended Diploma in Nail Technologies
BT3D6.ED6	VTCT Level 3 Diploma/Extended Diploma in Theatrical and Media Make-up
BT3D7	VTCT Level 3 Combined Diploma in Beauty Therapy
CT3D1	VTCT Level 3 Diploma in Complementary Therapies
HB3D1.ED1	VTCT Level 3 Diploma/Extended Diploma in Hairdressing
HB3D2.ED2	VTCT Level 3 Diploma/Extended Diploma in Barbering
HB3D6	VTCT Level 3 Combined Diploma in Hairdressing

HC3D2.ED2	VTCT Level 3 Diploma/Extended Diploma in Advanced Professional Cookery
HC3D3	VTCT Level 3 Diploma in Professional Patisserie and Confectionery
SP3D16	VTCT Level 3 Diploma in Personal Training
SP3D21	VTCT Level 3 Diploma in Massage and Therapies for Sport

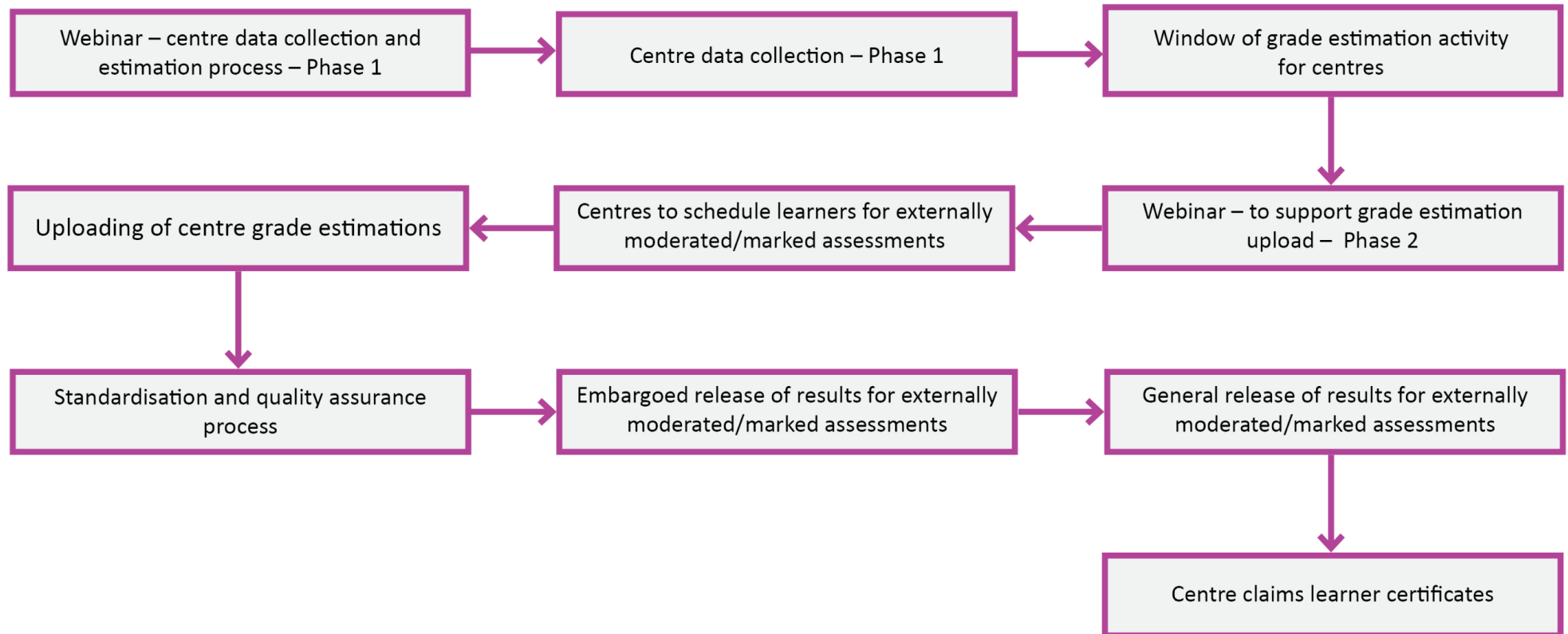
VTCT's Technical Certificates and Technical Level Qualifications are primarily delivered to 16-18 year olds and provide progression into further studies or employment.

4. Timelines

VTCT is committed to releasing learner results on the dates published in the key dates calendar for the Summer 2020 series. Collaboration between VTCT and our centres will be essential during this intense period of activity. It is critical that our centres meet the deadline dates that have been set to enable their learners to receive results and be certificated. It is important to ensure that accurate information is submitted throughout the process as failure to do this may cause unnecessary delays. It may be necessary for VTCT to contact centres during this process, please be alert and responsive to our communications.

Date	Action
28.05.20	Complete data collection phase 1
20.05.20 to 12.06.20	Window of grade estimation activity for centres
w/c 01.06.20	Mandatory engagement webinar for phase 2 grade estimation upload
05.06.20	Schedule learners for externally moderated/marked assessments
12.06.20	Deadline for uploading of centre grade estimations
23.06.20 to 06.07.20	Standardisation and Quality Assurance process of externally moderated/marked assessments
June to August	EQA activity for Technical Certificate and Technical Level Qualifications

5. Overview of process



6. Phase One – data collection of learner profiles

The initial stage of the grade estimation process is a mandatory data collection that all centres delivering PTQs are required to complete. Centres will be required to categorise their registered learners, for each PTQ that they offer, into one of the following categories:

- Withdraw
- Estimate – in-flight learners
- Estimate – completing learners
- Delay
- Complete

The teacher/s delivering the qualification will be responsible for deciding on the correct mitigation process for each of their learners. This information will then need to be passed to the Exams Officer to enable them to process the data collection.

VTCT has published an additional guidance document to support centres in completing the data collection.

The deadline for submission for the mandatory data collection is 28th May.

6.1. Learner profiles

Centres will categorise their learners using the following principles:

‘Withdraw’ category

Centres go through a formal process to withdraw learners from their programme of study at centre level but this information may not have been passed to VTCT. If there are any learners on the pre-populated web form that have not been formally withdrawn with VTCT, they will need to be placed into the ‘withdraw’ category.

There may be some learners pre-populated on the web form from previous years who were not formally withdrawn from the qualification; in this instance centres will need to place these learners in the ‘withdraw’ category.

‘Estimate - In-flight learners’ category

In-flight learners refers to learners that are in year one of a two year programme, for example year 12 learners in their first year of the Technical Level combined diploma who are not due to complete their qualification until 2021. VTCT has decided to adopt the same approach for in-flight learners as for completing learners, so as not to disadvantage the learners and to help to lessen the burden on learners and centres in the next year of study.

‘Estimate - Completing learners’ category

Completing learners refers to learners who are due to complete their qualification in Summer 2020. For example, this may be year 13 learners in the second year of the Technical Level combined diploma who are due to complete the qualification in summer 2020.

'Delay' category

Centres may choose to delay learners based on the principles of estimation and the minimum threshold requirements. Delayed learners would return to the centres to complete their qualification at a later date. Information on the principles of estimation and the minimum threshold requirements for grade estimation can be found within this centre guidance pack and the webinar slides published on the secure area of the VTCT website. VTCT has put in place contingency assessment windows to support delayed learners.

'Complete' category

There may be some learners who have completed all the components and requirements for a qualification and the centre is ready to claim their certificate. In this instance the learner can be placed into the 'Complete' category and the certificate can be claimed using the standard process.

6.2. Resitting learners

There may be some learners within the centre who were planning to re-sit assessments in summer 2020. In this instance centres can follow the same procedure for grade estimation. The learner would be placed into one of the 'Estimate' categories.

6.3. Registration of additional learners

Centres will be able to identify if they intend to register additional learners on the qualification. If there are learners within the centre who are not yet registered on the qualification, centres will need to action this as soon as possible to avoid further delays in this process.

7. Phase Two – grade estimation

Once centres have categorised their learners, the process of estimating learner grades will commence. Estimated grades will need to be based on the principles of grade estimation and the minimum threshold requirements.

For the Technical Certificates and Technical Level Qualifications, centres will be required to estimate grades for the assessment components that learners were due to complete in the Summer 2020 window. This may include one or more of the following components:

- External examinations (paper 1 and paper 2)
- Unit graded assessments
- Synoptic assessment

7.1. Principles for grade estimation

Ofqual has recognised the complexity of the vocational and technical qualifications landscape, therefore VTCT will not be in a position to adopt a detailed and prescriptive approach to grade estimation. Instead, VTCT has established a flexible principles-based approach which delegates to centres the decision-making around grade estimations.

VTCT has set principles on which to base your centre grade estimations. These principles are listed in order of importance with number one being of the highest importance when estimating your learner grades.

The Principles for grade estimation for the Technical Certificates and Technical Level Qualifications are as follows:

1. Safe to practise to go into industry
2. Basing estimation on most trusted sources of evidence
3. Maintain standards, as far as possible, with the same qualification in line with previous years
4. Maintain integrity of performance table qualifications
5. Learner has demonstrated commitment to the course and has had sufficient attendance
6. Learner demonstrates skills and behaviours that are highly valued by employers

7.2. Minimum threshold of evidence

Centres will be required to make professional judgements when ascertaining if a learner is eligible for the grade estimation process. Centres should consider the principles of grade estimation when making their decisions. This principle based approach will help to ensure that no learner has been unwittingly disadvantaged by a rigid estimation process. The principles are a framework for decision making and represent critically important requirements. Centre should give priority to meeting the principles in accordance with the order in which they are set out. Where there is a conflict between two or more principles, the centre must consider the principles in the order in which they are set out. VTCT recognises that centres may have to make difficult decisions and it is likely that some compromises will become unavoidable. Centres should be consistent in how they make these compromises.

7.3. Banked assessment components

A banked assessment component is an assessment that has been marked or moderated by VTCT. The banked component grade that the learner achieved has been issued and quality checked by VTCT. For example, this may be a completed external examination paper or a unit graded assessment which has been confirmed by an External Quality Assurer.

7.4. Teacher judgement

VTCT are asking schools and colleges to use their professional experience and integrity to make a fair and objective judgement of the grade they believe a learner would have achieved if they had sat their assessments this year. Centres are best placed to make these decisions due to the fact that the teachers know their learners and the progress they have made throughout the academic year. Estimations must be carried out by the teacher/s delivering the qualification to the learners. A rationale will be required to support the centre grade estimations.

7.5. Reasonable adjustments

Schools and colleges will judge the grade that these learners would most likely have achieved if they had been able to sit their assessments with the intended reasonable adjustment or access arrangement in place.

7.6. Equalities and protected characteristics

Judgements by centres regarding learners' estimated grades must be made in an unbiased, impartial and balanced way. Centres are to ensure that learners with protected characteristics are not systematically advantaged or disadvantaged by the grade estimation process. The grade profiles of learners with protected characteristics are to have increased internal quality assurance. VTCT may request evidence from centres to ensure the process has been fair to all learners.

7.7. Trusted sources of evidence

VTCT has listed the trusted sources of evidence for the Technical Certificates and Technical Level Qualifications that centres may use to support their grade estimation decisions. The sources of evidence have been listed in order of trust, and as discussed in the principles of grade estimation, centres must maximise the use of the most trusted sources.

Theory examination

- Banked assessment components – paper 1 and paper 2
- Historic achievement data for previous cohorts
- Learners' performance on completed mock papers and past papers
- Learners' performance on internally set/assessed work books
- Learners' performance on internally assessed assignments
- Learner profile (attendance, reasonable adjustments, progress reviews, etc.)

Unit graded and synoptic assessment

- Banked assessment components
- Historic achievement data for previous cohorts
- Completed assessment component (pre EQA activity)
- Partially completed assessment component/s
- Completed treatment/service portfolio evidence
- Learners performance on oral questioning/professional discussions
- Learners performance on formative/peer assessment activities
- Work placement witness testimonies
- Learner profile (attendance, reasonable adjustments, progress reviews, etc.)

7.8. Rank order

VTCT is also asking schools and colleges to provide a rank order of learners within each grade for the estimated assessment component. This is because the statistical standardisation process conducted by VTCT will need more granular information than the grade alone.

For example, if a centre has 15 learners on the qualification for whom the centre has given an estimated assessment grade of Merit, the centre should then rank them from 1 to 15, where 1 is the most secure in the grade and 15 being the least secure. It is important to note that tied ranks, that is, giving two learners position 1, will not be allowed.

7.9. Centre declaration

Each set of centre assessment grades for a subject must be signed off by key members of staff involved in the estimation process. This may include the teacher delivering the qualification and the internal quality assurer. Where a staff member might have a personal interest in a learner (for example as a relative), Heads of Centre should make sure that additional controls are put in place, as appropriate. The Head of Centre will be required to confirm that the estimated assessment grades and the rank order of learners are a true representation of learner performance. In reviewing these estimated assessment grades, the Head of Centre should consider how the distribution of estimated assessment grades compares with grades achieved by the centre in previous years.

VTCT will provide centres with a declaration document to complete when the estimated assessment grades are uploaded to VTCT.

7.10. Sharing data with learners, parents and carers

Learners, parents and carers will want to know that the process of generating estimated assessment grades is rigorous, objective and fair. Centres must not, under any circumstances, share the centre assessment grades nor the rank order of learners with learners, or their parents/carers or any other individuals outside the centre, before final results have been issued.

Data subjects (learners) are able to request their personal data under Article 15 of the General Data Protection Regulation. However, in respect of personal data such as marks or other information processed by a Data Controller for the purposes of determining results, an exemption from disclosure exists under paragraph 25(2) of the Data Protection Act. This allows Data Controllers (in this case centres) to delay disclosure of such information until after results have been issued.

This is to protect the integrity of teachers' judgements, and to avoid teachers, heads of department, senior leaders or Heads of Centre being put under pressure by learners and parents to submit a grade that is not supported by the evidence. Since the final grades for some or all learners in a centre could be different from those submitted, it also helps to manage learners' expectations.

8. Phase Two – submitting data to VTCT

Once centres have completed the grade estimation process, centres will need to submit their estimated grades to VTCT. Centres will need to submit grades for all the individual assessment components that have been estimated for their learners. Centres will not be required to estimate the overall qualification grade.

VTCT will release further guidance to support centres in uploading their learners estimated grades. Centres should not try to submit any estimated grades until VTCT has issued specific instructions for this process.

9. Standardisation and Quality Assurance

Centres will be required to demonstrate a robust internal quality assurance process to support the estimated grades. Centre internal quality assurance activity and VTCT's standardisation and quality assurance activity will be based on risk. VTCT will provide additional documentation for centres to record their internal quality assurance activity.

Some centres may experience more intense scrutiny as part of VTCT's quality assurance process, for example centres in their first year of delivery of a qualification.

9.1. External quality assurance activity

VTCT's Technical Certificates and Technical Level Qualifications will require an External Quality Assurance (EQA) visit. This visit will take place remotely and will focus on the centre estimated grades for the unit graded and synoptic assessments. The activity will focus on the trusted sources of evidence used to support the centre estimated grades. Centres will be required to demonstrate robust internal quality assurance processes. Centres will be required to maintain records of their internal quality assurance activity. As standard practice, all internal and external quality assurance activity will be based on risk.

9.2. Requirement for extra evidence

VTCT may make contact with centres during the standardisation and quality assurance process if evidence to support the centre grade estimations is required. This may be applicable if there is either an increase or decrease in the centre grade profile for an assessment component or overall qualification grade.

9.3. Analysis of data

VTCT will review and analyse assessment component data submitted for each centre and the overall cohort qualification grade profile. VTCT will be analysing and interrogating unusual patterns within the data and variations from what VTCT has typically seen in previous assessment series.

VTCT will review this data against the following:

- Historic centre achievement for unit/s and qualification
- Historic VTCT held cohort achievement for unit/s and qualification

- Volume of entries for summer assessment series compared to historic data
- Volume of entries for internally assessed components compared to historic data

10. Issuing of results and certificate claims

VTCT will be releasing the results for learners in line with the published dates in the 'Key Dates' document. Centres will claim learner certificates following the standard process for the qualification. VTCT encourages our centres to submit certificate claims promptly.

11. Appeals

Learners who feel that their grades from the summer do not reflect their ability will have the opportunity to retake their assessments in the autumn series or in summer 2021. If they choose to do this, both grades will stand. VTCT's 'Enquiries and appeals policy and procedures' document is our standard policy for enquiries about results and appeals against assessment decisions. In addition, there will be a special appeals process for learners once estimated results have been released by VTCT.

Ofqual's 'Exceptional Regulatory Framework' sets out a learners' right to appeal if the relevant process was not followed correctly by the awarding organisation. Learners will not be able to appeal against teacher judgements.

12. Contingency windows

VTCT has contingency assessment windows planned for autumn to support completion of delayed learners or for learners who wish to retake an assessment component. Please see the 'Key Dates' document on the qualifications page of the website for the most up to date information.

13. Further advice and guidance

The following resources will be made available to support centres through the grade estimation process:

- Instructions for completing the Phase One Data Collection for learner profiles
- A further webinar to support centres in scheduling learners and submitting estimated grades to VTCT will take place w/c 1st June
- All webinars will be uploaded to the VTCT website (centre log-in required)
- FAQs following the webinar will be published with the webinar slides
- For further enquiries please contact customersupport@vtct.org.uk

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