

Vocational and technical qualifications contingency regulatory framework (VCRF)

FDQ's guide to the VCRF

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to affect the delivery and assessment of vocational and technical qualifications. The qualifications regulators continue to work with the education sector to support learners through these challenging times.

The Extraordinary Regulatory Framework (ERF) and Extended Extraordinary Regulatory Framework (ExtERF) are now replaced by the **Vocational and Technical Contingency Regulatory Framework (VCRF)**.

The purpose of this document is to provide clear guidance to FDQ centres on the VCRF and more specifically:

- the categorisation of FDQ's qualifications into Group A and Group B as defined by the regulators
- how qualification categorisation affects how assessment can be completed
- timelines
- adapted assessment and what to do if you need to carry out adapted assessment.

Our regulators Ofqual, CCEA Regulation and Qualifications Wales have developed the Vocational and Technical Contingency Regulatory Framework. The England and NI frameworks are consistent and can be found [here](#) whilst Wales has yet to publish its version, we are assured it is broadly in line with Ofqual's version.

These arrangements are designed to ensure learners, wherever possible, continue with their chosen qualifications, whilst maintaining the validity and reliability of assessment evidence. The arrangements will also ensure results are as reliable and consistent as possible.

What is the Vocational and Technical Contingency Regulatory Framework (VCRF)?

The qualifications regulators, Ofqual, CCEA Regulation and Qualifications Wales have developed the **Vocational and Technical Contingency Regulatory Framework** to support the award of qualifications through to 31st August 2021. The VCRF replaces the

guidance provided in the Extended Extraordinary Regulatory Framework published in October 2020 and the Extraordinary Regulatory Framework published in May 2020.

Given that whilst some restrictions have been lifted COVID-19 continues cause disruption. We must recognise previous disruption and anticipate some continued disruption to teaching, learning and assessment. FDQ is committed to:

- helping where possible to mitigate this disruption
- supporting our centres in ensuring learners receive fair assessment
- ensuring no learner is disadvantaged.

During COVID-19 conditions, normal assessment in colleges and workplaces has not been possible for many learners. The VCRF supports the following:

- adaptation to the usual method of assessment – for example the use of remote assessment to replace face to face assessment
- delay to assessment until usual methods of assessment can resume.

The content, RoC, level of demand of FDQ qualifications will **not** change.

Which FDQ qualifications are affected by the VCRF?

The VCRF applies to all FDQ qualifications.

The VCRF categorises qualification into:

Group A Qualifications

The following applies to Group A qualifications:

- Assessment can carry on as normal and can be delayed
- Assessments may be made available as normal or with adaptations
- Typically, qualifications which signal occupational or professional competency, proficiency or act as a licence to practise.
- Results can only be awarded when assessments (exams or internal assessments) have taken place
- Some assessments may be delayed where necessary to comply with public health guidance
- Most FDQ qualifications fall into Group A.

Group B Qualifications

Be registered between 1st August 2020 and 31st August 2021

The following applies to Group B qualifications

- Qualifications which are important for progression to further or higher study or into employment where the issue of results should be prioritised
- Results can be awarded when not all assessments (exams or internal assessments) have taken place, including with teacher judgement (Teacher Assessed Grades)
- For qualifications most similar to GCSEs, AS and A levels, the approach to awarding should be similar to that proposed for those qualifications – exams will not take place and it may not be necessary to complete all internal assessment.
- Assessments may be made available as normal or with adaptations
- Small number of FDQ qualifications fall into Group B.

Ofqual Qualification Explainer Tool can be found here [Summer 2021 Qualification Explainer Tool \(ofqual.gov.uk\)](#)

This explainer tool shows how qualifications including FDQ's, will be assessed and awarded in the period up to 31 August 2021. It covers qualifications regulated by Ofqual, Qualifications Wales and CCEA Regulation (in England, Wales and Northern Ireland respectively).

It has a useful qualification finder and FAQ section.

Which learners are affected?

All learners currently registered on an FDQ qualification, or who will be registered up to and including on 31st August 2021, when we will review this guidance, unless directed by our regulators.

Learners may, if they prefer, delay any outstanding assessments until government advised contact restrictions are relaxed and assessment can take place as usual.

What timelines apply?

The VCRF and therefore these arrangements are temporary.

These arrangements apply to learners registered for one or more FDQ qualifications which are due to have assessments before 31st August 2021.

What if a FDQ centre is currently using adapted assessment or would like to apply to use adapted assessment?

The VCRF permits mitigation of the disruption caused to teaching, learning and assessment, by the Covid-19 pandemic in the form of an adaptation.

Definition: adaptations

"Any changes made by an awarding organisation to a VTQ that it makes available, including changes to design, setting, delivery or marking of an assessment" Ofqual VCRF March 2021

The VCRF permits FDQ Centres to use adapted assessments to mitigate disruption caused by COVID-19.

Centres must contact FDQ at fdq@fdq.org.uk to request a specific adaptation assessment method **and** receive permission from FDQ to make the adaptation **before** they use adapted assessments with any learners.

If over the past year a centre has applied to use adapted assessment for a specific qualification you do not need to reapply.

However, if a centre

- has not used adapted assessment but would now like to do so
- would like to use adapted assessment for a different qualification
- would like to use a different type of adaptation

an application must be made to FDQ at fdq@fdq.org.uk. We will reply promptly.

Reasons to use adapted assessment

Whilst qualification delivery continues 2021, centres may need to adapt their assessments as national, local, employer or college restrictions continue. The following are possible reasons for adaptations but is not an exhaustive list and may include:

- Loss of teaching and learning for Learners moving into the second year of their qualification
- Time required for Learners to settle back into their learning
- Restricted access to Centres meaning that Learners are not able to attend as frequently as they ordinarily would be able to
- Work-based teaching or assessment that is impacted by public health guidance/restrictions, such as social distancing measures
- The teaching or assessment of practical skills that is impacted by public health guidance or restrictions, such as social distancing measures
- Access to specialist equipment or particular facilities are restricted
- Teaching or assessment that involves working in groups or teams, is client facing or involves a public performance whilst social distancing measures are in place.

Types of adapted assessment

The following are a number of ways in which a centre makes adaptations to teaching, learning and assessment in order to mitigate any disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Making more teaching and learning time available for example, by considering alternative conditions under which assessments could take place so that they do not all need to be directly supervised, or by streamlining assessments
- Changing the way in which assessments are delivered, for example, by using an online rather than paper-based test, or carrying out an assessment remotely rather than face-to-face
- Adapting assessment methods to take account of social distancing and public health guidance, for example, by using a practical simulation in place of an observation, or professional discussion in place of a practical demonstration
- Changing invigilation requirements, for example, by allowing the use of online invigilation so that assessments can take place in a wider range of settings
- Waiving or adjusting work experience or placement requirements, for example, allowing learners to undertake a shorter period of work experience

- Changing the way in which a qualification is quality assured, for example, by allowing standardisation or moderation, external quality assurance or Centre Assessment Standards Scrutiny to take place remotely or on-line.

Where a learner has missed teaching and learning as a consequence of public health guidance, adaptations to assessment should be considered rather than the use of special consideration.

More specifically centres may apply to FDQ for an adaptation to enable

- MCQ knowledge tests to be invigilated remotely
- Emails, telephone calls and video links between tutors and learners covering underpinning knowledge to be accepted as assessment evidence
- Evidence to be collected and completed via video recordings of live activities and sent through to assessors for checking and feedback
- Practical elements for example cake icing units – to be practised and, in some instances created at home, photographed and discussed at a later stage with the assessor
- Adaptations to consider guidance around social distancing, particularly in relation to group work and practical tasks

The above are examples of adaptations, not a definitive list. If you are unsure if an adaptation is allowed, please do contact FDQ at fdq@fdq.org.uk, we are open to discussions around innovative methods of assessment.

What should I do if I need to use adapted assessment?

If you are planning to use adapted assessment, including those listed above please make a request by emailing fdq@fdq.org.uk with a brief description including the following:

- centre name
- contact name
- qualification affected
- number of learners affected; approximate if exact number not yet known
- brief description of the adaptation.

FDQ will get back to you to confirm go ahead or to considered. If you are unsure if an adaptation is permitted, do not use the adaptation and please email FDQ to discuss further: at fdq@fdq.org.uk , we will reply as promptly.

Can centres use Teacher Assessed Grades?

Teacher assessed Grades can only be used for specific qualifications. If your centre needs further information regarding TAGs, please contact FDQ at fdq@fdq.org.uk

What if assessments are delayed?

For some types of qualification e.g., certain competence-based qualifications, or under some circumstances, it may be preferable to delay rather than adapt an assessment, e.g., where there is:

- no access to learners face to face or remote
- where the learner has chosen to delay an assessment.

Delaying an assessment until usual practice can resume and the assessment is rescheduled is a viable option. If an assessment is delayed please do let us know by emailing fdq@fdq.org.uk with a brief description of the reason for the delay, we will reply promptly.

As part of FDQ's External Quality Assurance (EQA) process, your EQAC may ask if any of your assessments are currently delayed.

What if assessment has carried on as usual?

In certain sectors and for some qualifications assessment will carry on as usual.

Certification claims for these qualifications, will continue as usual via FDQAwards. As part of EQA, your EQAC will sample qualifications that have carried on assessment as usual.

What information should be provided to Learners?

It is important that the methods used to determine qualification results are transparent to learners, parents, centres etc.

The qualifications regulators have provided some useful information that may be shared with learners and centre colleagues:

- Ofqual Qualifications Explainer Tool: [Summer 2021 Qualification Explainer Tool \(ofqual.gov.uk\)](https://www.ofqual.gov.uk/qualifications-explainer-tool/)
- Ofqual Infographic - how vocational and technical qualifications will be awarded in 2021.pdf
- Information for learners and parents
- Information for centres

How should centres apply Reasonable Adjustments or Special Consideration to adapted assessments?

See FDQ's Reasonable Adjustment and Special Consideration policy at www.FDQ.org.uk

Where assessment adaptations are in place, centres should consider the likely impact of any reasonable adjustment or special consideration to which a learner would have had access.

More broadly, centres should make their judgements when applying adapted assessment in an impartial, balanced way so that, as far as possible, the information provided by them avoids bias and learners are not systematically advantaged or disadvantaged by having or not having a Characteristic or special educational need.

Centres should consider whether they can adapt or further adapt assessment before considering if Special Considerations apply. Where a learner has missed teaching and learning as a consequence of public health guidance, adaptations to qualifications and assessments should be considered, rather than special consideration. FDQ's special consideration policy and application can be found at www.FDQ.org.uk.

Internal Quality Assurance

As an FDQ approved centre, you will know that quality assurance of centres is at the heart of FDQ operations, and is designed to help ensure that all centres consistently meet FDQ's qualification provision requirements.

In order for quality assurance to be effective and relevant to this extraordinary range of situations, fit-for-purpose monitoring, evaluation and reporting is essential. Internal quality assurance, more so than ever will provide a vital role in ensuring learner results – adapted or completed as usual – are fair and consistent.

The focus of this activity is on the quality, consistency and integrity of assessment. Our EQACs will sample internal quality assurance records as part of on-going external quality assurance activity.

External Quality Assurance

Your EQAC will make contact with your centre to organise suitable External Quality Assurance (EQA). We understand at present EQA may be remote, using access to centres. online systems or via remote meeting software.

At EQA, there will be emphasis on valid and reliable assessment including the following:

- assessment evidence
- record of any adapted assessments
- IQA.

There will of course, also be some focus on adapted assessment evidence.

How will appeals work?

Please refer to FDQ's Appeals policy found on our website www.fdq.org.uk

Useful documents available on FDQAwards:

- FDQ's Invigilation Guide
- FDQ's Guide to using video/photo/audio as qualification assessment evidence
- FDQ's Guide to FDQAssess



Contact

We understand that the VCRF arrangements are being implemented in unprecedented times so please do contact FDQ's Quality and Operations Director, Jo Sterritt fdq@fdq.org.uk if you would like to discuss any of the above or require additional information.