



# Adaptation blueprint for 2021-22

Version 2 | August 2021

## Introduction

The government's intention is that work placements, exams and assessments will take place in the academic year 2021 to 2022, therefore moving away from results being based on Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs) used in 2020 to 2021, where this was permitted. This is because assessments and exams continue to be the fairest way for students to evidence what they know, all other things being equal.

The government recognises, however, that students who will be taking exams and assessments have experienced significant disruption to their education and that these students may also need continued support in the face of any further disruption.

We recognise that students who will be taking exams and assessments in 2021 to 2022 have had significant disruption to their education since March 2020, and we remain committed in continuing to support students in the face of any further disruption.

In the academic year of 2021 to 2022 under the 'Vocational and Technical Qualifications Contingency Regulatory Framework' (VCRF) all qualifications will move into Category A. This means all assessments are expected to continue but we are permitted to continue to make adaptations to assessments and qualifications to take account of the ongoing impact of the pandemic, where we can do so without undermining the validity and reliability of our qualifications.

Students must only access permitted adaptations where they are needed to mitigate the impact of learning loss, continued disruption and / or ongoing public health restrictions. This will be monitored through our external quality assurance process to support the validation of any adaptations adopted, ensuring they are not applied where not needed. Where adaptations are applied unnecessarily, centres may be given an action or downgraded in their EQA reviews, therefore they need to be sure to check with their allocated EQA on the application of any adaptations.

This blueprint summarises the adaptations we have put in place for the 2021-22 academic session and how we are adapting NCFE assessment requirements given the flexibilities afforded by the Ofqual VCRF Regulatory Framework.

## Assessment blueprint for the 2021-2022 academic session

No.	Assessment type	Adaptations for 2021-22 session
1	Internal assessment: knowledge	<p>All content must be delivered, and all assessment criteria assessed.</p> <p>Internal assessment can be undertaken remotely, where required, for learners where possible. We will also continue to offer remote EQA reviews and further guidance on how to prepare for this can be found <a href="#">here</a>.</p> <p>We believe that the flexibilities that centres already have with respect to the types of evidence they may use to meet assessment criteria, are sufficient to enable most learners to continue to mitigate the ongoing Covid-related risks. This includes the continuation of the use of alternative assessment methods or evidence where needed or required. You can find further advice and guidance on the preparation of portfolios of evidence <a href="#">here</a>.</p> <p>To support with learning loss, remote learning where required or where centres may experience continued or localised disruption to learning, we've created guidance to support a more streamlined approach to assessment and to increase flexibility. We have updated our guidance <a href="#">here</a> and continue to permit the use of 'centre devised assessments'.</p> <p>We would also encourage centres to consider how they might use alternative and/or digital solutions to gather and store evidence including, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• centre-set short response or multi-choice tests</li> <li>• professional discussion recordings</li> <li>• annotated learning plans</li> <li>• photos and videos.</li> </ul> <p>We've partnered up with VEO, who offer a digital solution for <a href="#">Video Enhanced Observations</a> (VEO). VEO is a secure video online platform for recording and tagging videos. It offers a more efficient way to mark NCFE skills assessments, which can be undertaken remotely. VEO empowers <a href="#">learners</a> and teachers by providing a simple and secure way to capture observation-based assessments, that saves time while preparing learners to pass skill-based assessments. The platform allows you to digitally record and <a href="#">mark practical assessments</a> online and remotely.</p>

		<p>To support with learning loss, we have developed free virtual reality online resources in the subject areas of pregnancy and nursery care, which can be accessed from the following links:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">NurseryVue</a> is a free, virtual reality immersive experience for all Early Years learners and trainee Childcare and Nursery Assistants. It helps to understand the health and safety factors involved in working with children in a nursery, with our NurseryVue app (currently available for desktop viewing for both PC and Mac). NurseryVue provides an accurate, true-to-life picture of what it's like to work in a nursery setting.</li> <li>• <a href="#">PregnancyVue</a> is a free, virtual reality fully immersive 3D learning experience of its kind. It helps to develop understanding of child development from conception to birth with our PregnancyVue app. A virtual reality (VR) experience designed in consultation with learners, tutors and subject specialists that gives the clearest picture of the pregnancy journey for both mother and child.</li> </ul>
2	Internal assessment: skills and knowledge	<p>All content must be delivered, and all assessment criteria assessed.</p> <p>Internal assessment can be undertaken remotely, where required, for learners where possible. We will also continue to offer remote EQA reviews and further guidance on how to prepare for this can be found <a href="#">here</a>.</p> <p>We believe that the flexibilities that centres already have with respect to the types of evidence they may use to meet assessment criteria, are sufficient to enable most learners to continue to mitigate the ongoing Covid-related risks. This includes the continuation of the use of alternative assessment methods or evidence where needed or required. You can find further advice and guidance on the preparation of portfolios of evidence <a href="#">here</a>.</p> <p>To support with learning loss, remote learning where required or where centres may experience continued or localised disruption to learning, we've created guidance to support a more streamlined approach to assessment and to increase flexibility. We have updated our guidance <a href="#">here</a> and continue to permit the use of 'centre devised assessments'.</p>

	<p>We appreciate that to create and capture evidence for the skills aspect of these assessments, learners may need access to specialist facilities/equipment. As our existing guidance permits, to mitigate Covid-related challenges in accessing facilities/equipment, we would encourage centres to consider, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• using expert witness testimonies to confirm the observation of learner competence over time where direct observation is not possible</li> <li>• using observation of simulated activity to evidence the demonstration of competence where direct observation is not possible</li> <li>• using digital solutions to capture evidence remotely where learners can access required facilities/equipment away from the centre, but teaching staff cannot observe at that location</li> <li>• carefully considering how you schedule teaching, learning and assessment activity during the year, recognising that you may not be able to access specialist facilities/equipment in all weeks.</li> </ul> <p>We would also encourage centres to consider how they might use alternative and/or digital solutions to gather and store evidence including, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• centre-set short response or multi-choice tests</li> <li>• professional discussion recordings</li> <li>• annotated learning plans</li> <li>• photos and videos.</li> </ul> <p>We've partnered up with VEO, who offer a digital solution for <a href="#">Video Enhanced Observations</a> (VEO). VEO is a secure video online platform for recording and tagging videos. It offers a more efficient way to mark NCFE skills assessments, which can be undertaken remotely. VEO empowers <a href="#">learners</a> and teachers by providing a simple and secure way to capture observation-based assessments, that saves time while preparing learners to pass skill-based assessments. The platform allows you to digitally record and <a href="#">mark practical assessments</a> online and remotely.</p> <p>To support with learning loss, we have developed free virtual reality online resources in the subject areas of pregnancy and nursery care, which can be accessed from the following links:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">NurseryVue</a> is a free, virtual reality immersive experience for all Early Years learners and trainee Childcare and</li> </ul>
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		<p>Nursery Assistants. It helps to understand the health and safety factors involved in working with children in a nursery, with our NurseryVue app (currently available for desktop viewing for both PC and Mac). NurseryVue provides an accurate, true-to-life picture of what it's like to work in a nursery setting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">PregnancyVue</a> is a free, virtual reality fully immersive 3D learning experience of its kind. It helps to develop understanding of child development from conception to birth with our PregnancyVue app. A virtual reality (VR) experience designed in consultation with learners, tutors and subject specialists that gives the clearest picture of the pregnancy journey for both mother and child.</li> </ul>
3	Observation of skills via work placement: optional part of qualification	<p>NCFE appreciate that sourcing, supporting and assessing learners on work placements may be very challenging, therefore, we have decided that we are content that centres can continue to remove optional placements from programmes during the 2021–22 academic year and still claim certification as a permanent adaptation.</p> <p>Based on some sector body requirements there may still be a requirement for learners to complete a personal skills record. Where this is the case, we will confirm this on our adaptation guide, which will be available on QualHub.</p> <p>Though incredibly valuable to learners' progress we appreciate that sourcing, supporting, and assessing learners on work placements can be challenging, and that optional placements do not contribute to grades. In order to ensure we do not place additional burden on centres, we have removed the requirement of the optional work placement from qualifications where it does not contribute to the overall grade.</p>
4	Observation of competence via workplace or mandatory work placement; essential e.g. due to licence to practice requirements in a	<p>Where the work placement is essential for occupational competency or licence to practice requirements, the relevant qualification content must still be delivered, and assessment criteria met.</p> <p>Learners are still required to complete the work placement, but the focus should be on learning outcomes and evidencing competence. We have removed the requirement for learners to complete a</p>

<p>given occupational area</p>	<p>minimum number of placement hours, although hours should still be recorded.</p> <p>Where the work placement is essential for occupational competency or licence to practice requirements, the relevant content must still be delivered, and assessment criteria met. It is not possible to award qualifications safely, reliably, and validly if key occupational skills have not been demonstrated and assessed.</p> <p>We have undertaken a full review of all assessments within this category. We have worked with sector bodies, regulators and other awarding organisations to review whether the work placement must still be completed and if so the number of placement hours required. We have also looked at additional flexibilities around simulation and direct observation.</p> <p>Where mandatory work placement is required within the home care setting, we understand they may be additional requirements expected around learners needing mandatory vaccinations before undertaking work placements and therefore we have reviewed this against specific qualifications this relates to in the health and social care sector and have updated our adaptation addenda to confirm our mitigations for 16-18 and 19+ learners.</p> <p>We have outlined within each adaptation addenda where it is possible to adopt alternative assessments methods to demonstrate some of the requisite practical skills. These adaptations could include expert witness testimony, simulation or reflective work accounts. Where it is <b>not</b> possible to adapt the assessment and workplace demonstration is still required, we have made it clear in the adaptation addenda.</p> <p>Where possible and relevant for mandatory work placements, where the qualifications are also used to support progression to higher or further education, we've put in place a 'knowledge only' fall back option to support and enable learners to progress, for those who may undergo difficulty in securing work placement opportunities throughout their studies. Any performance table qualifications, with a 'knowledge only' fall back option, will not count in performance tables for completing learners in 2022.</p> <p>Further guidance on permitted adaptations for work placements can be found on the relevant qualification adaptation addenda.</p>
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		<p>No further alternative awarding arrangements can be applied to mandatory work placement, therefore where they cannot be completed a delay may be required.</p> <p>We've partnered up with VEO, who offer a digital solution for <a href="#">Video Enhanced Observations</a> (VEO). VEO is a secure video online platform for recording and tagging videos. It offers a more efficient way to mark NCFE skills assessments, which can be undertaken remotely. VEO empowers <a href="#">learners</a> and teachers by providing a simple and secure way to capture observation-based assessments, that saves time while preparing learners to pass skill-based assessments. The platform allows you to digitally record and <a href="#">mark practical assessments</a> such as work placement or simulated activities online and remotely.</p> <p>To support with learning loss and some aspects of work placement simulation, we have developed free virtual reality online resources in the subject areas of pregnancy and nursery care, which can be accessed from the following links:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">NurseryVue</a> is a free, virtual reality immersive experience for all Early Years learners and trainee Childcare and Nursery Assistants. It helps to understand the health and safety factors involved in working with children in a nursery, with our NurseryVue app (currently available for desktop viewing for both PC and Mac). NurseryVue provides an accurate, true-to-life picture of what it's like to work in a nursery setting.</li> <li>• <a href="#">PregnancyVue</a> is a free, virtual reality fully immersive 3D learning experience of its kind. It helps to develop understanding of child development from conception to birth with our PregnancyVue app. A virtual reality (VR) experience designed in consultation with learners, tutors and subject specialists that gives the clearest picture of the pregnancy journey for both mother and child.</li> </ul> <p><b>Placement Support: We understand that it may be challenging for learners to enter placement settings due to ongoing public health restrictions and therefore, we have created a pre-placement programme for learners who may not be able to access their placements.</b> The preparing for placement</p>
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		<p>programme will be a useful tool for learners to work through whilst waiting for a suitable time to begin their placements or re-enter settings. We have created separate programmes for learners in the following sectors: early years and childcare; health and social care; and, supporting teaching and learning. Find the programme suitable for your learners on the individual sector pages linked below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Early years and childcare</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Health and social care</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Supporting teaching and learning</a></li> </ul> <p><b>Covid-19 vaccination for further education students</b> Under existing advice, young people aged 16 to 17 with underlying health conditions which put them at higher risk of serious Covid-19 should have already been offered vaccination. Young people aged 16 to 17 years, who are employed in, studying or in training for health and social care work will also continue to be eligible for vaccination.</p> <p>JCVI have also recommended an ongoing offer of vaccination to those about to turn 18 years old, so that those within 3 months of their 18th birthday are eligible for vaccination.</p>
5	Multiple Choice and Short Answer Questions	<p>A number of our qualifications include a Multiple Choice or Short Answer Question paper, which is set by us and the completed assessments returned to us for marking. Centres must pick a set date and time for these external assessments to take place and they must be invigilated in accordance with our regulations for the conduct of external assessment.</p> <p>These assessments can all be sat on demand online and in some cases paper based.</p> <p>All relevant qualification content must still be delivered, and assessment criteria met.</p> <p>The following adaptations are already in place to support centres to continue with these assessments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">invigilation exception request</a> that allows for you to apply for flexibility for Functional Skills</li> <li>• <a href="#">updated assessment variation process</a> to allow for additional or alternative test centre locations.</li> </ul>

		<p>No adaptations have been made at qualifications level, however to further support centres with these assessments we:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• have recently launched our remote invigilation offer, which will allow learners to sit online assessments anytime, anywhere</li> <li>• launched an on-demand paper-based solution for reformed Functional Skills.</li> </ul> <p>More information on our on-demand and remote invigilation solution can be found on our website.</p>
6	Set date assessments	<p>A large number of our qualifications have external assessments that must be sat on a set date and time and at your centre.</p> <p>Previously, where assessments were timetabled for a set date and time, we:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• updated our assessment variation process to allow centres to use additional test centre locations</li> </ul> <p>Where possible, we have now implemented further adaptations, which may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• added additional assessment opportunities</li> <li>• provide additional information within assessment materials, such as formulae or key legislation, this is to mitigate the impact of learning loss and ensure learners focus on the key purpose of the assessment rather than extraneous detail.</li> </ul> <p>In the 2021 to 2022 academic year, students will be permitted up to two retake opportunities for external assessments for all four categories of performance table VTQs (i.e., for Applied General, Tech Level, Technical Certificate and Technical Awards).</p> <p>The arrangements for T Levels<sup>1</sup> set out in the <a href="#">VCRF consultation outcomes</a> are, in line with other VTQs, that exams and assessments should go ahead in 2021 to 2022. There will be no adaptations to the core exam.</p>
7	Controlled assessment for speaking listening and communication (SLC)	<p>Our Functional Skills qualifications in English have controlled assessments for the SLC component.</p> <p>These assessments require learners to complete a presentation, question and answer session and a group discussion.</p>

		<p>We have continued the following adaptations into 2021-22 for the provision of the assessment, mark schemes and any source materials that learners will need to use during their assessments.</p> <p>The controlled assessment is administered under specified assessment conditions, to ensure Functional Skills qualifications assessments can continue.</p> <p>In order to support you with delivering assessments we have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• advised that centres could accommodate learners' SLC preparation time in advance of their reading/writing assessments to minimise the number of occasions the learner would need to travel.</li> </ul> <p>Where these assessments take place in an on-demand format and can be delivered in line with public health guidelines, SLC assessments should continue to proceed remotely.</p> <p>To support centres, we:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• allow preparation time to be completed under supervision via video conferencing if necessary</li> </ul> <p>For further information on our Functional Skills qualifications, <a href="#">please visit our website</a>.</p>
8	Controlled assessment/synoptic project	<p>These assessments are completed in a set number of hours and the centre arranges supervised periods of external assessment within a set window.</p> <p>The synoptic project is externally set by NCFE, internally graded by the centre and externally quality assured by NCFE. We have updated our assessment variation process to allow centres to use additional test centre locations.</p> <p>We've adapted our assessments so they can be delivered in line with public health guidelines. All relevant qualification content must still be delivered, and assessment criteria met.</p> <p>To further support centres, significant adaptations have been made to the conditions of the V Cert Technical Award synoptic projects, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• adapted the delivery and completion conditions so that it can now be completed by learners remotely where required</li> <li>• removed the requirement to complete within set hours</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>removed the requirement to be completed under controlled conditions</li> <li>removed the timescales around submission deadlines and brought forward the release of the synoptic project brief so centres can plan their own delivery timescales around their own delivery plan</li> </ul>
9	Employer-set project for T Levels	The arrangements for T Levels set out in the <a href="#">VCRF consultation outcomes</a> are, in line with other VTQs, that exams and assessments should go ahead in 2021 to 2022. There will be no adaptations to the employer-set project.
10	Task-based examination	<p>A number of our qualifications have task-based external assessments which must be sat over a set period of time at your centre.</p> <p>Previously, where assessments were timetabled for a set date and time, we:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>updated our assessment variation process to allow centres to use additional test centre locations</li> </ul> <p>Where possible, we have now implemented further adaptations, which may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>added additional assessment opportunities or extended assessment windows</li> </ul>
11	Independent self-study	<p>A number of our qualifications have independent self-study external assessments.</p> <p>Previously, we have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>updated our assessment variation process to allow centres to use additional test centre locations</li> <li>adapted our process to allow for evidence to be submitted electronically rather than by post.</li> </ul> <p>Where possible, we have now implemented further adaptations, which may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>added extended assessment windows</li> </ul>
12	Synoptic assignments and observation of skills assessment within	The arrangements for T Levels set out in the <a href="#">VCRF consultation outcomes</a> are, in line with other VTQs, that exams and assessments should go ahead in 2021 to 2022.

	occupational specialisms of the Technical Qualification: T Levels	To help students prepare for occupational specialism assessments, there may be adaptations made to the delivery of occupational specialism assessments. This may include, for example, pushing the set time for occupational specialism assessments back further in the academic year. Any such adaptations will need to be agreed between Ofqual and the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education. Any further adaptations, if approved, will be communicated to customers as soon as we are able.
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