



We have taken note of some of your most frequently asked questions and attempted to provide answers. *Please note this information is subject change as information is released by the DfE and our regulators so please review this page on a regular basis.*

These FAQs cover the counselling suite of qualifications, there are [further FAQ pages](#) to cover general VTQ qualifications, Access to HE and GAVFX suites.

CALCULATING GRADES AND EVIDENCE

I am concerned about the Level 3 Skills Component and how I will provide the appropriate evidence for grading learners, as the member of staff that taught this group has left.

Many centres are undertaking video roleplays using zoom/teams etc. Centres and learners should use the provided briefs, which detail guidance and information on assessing these skills, and the mark sheet on these briefs provides the criteria in which the learner must meet. You may look at an internal assessment that was completed already by the member of staff before they left and use the learner evidence that is available to make this judgement.

The grading judgement must be made on evidence you have available therefore it may be that you need to holistically assess from activity completed in other sessions. Alternatively, you may wish to delay the claiming process for the learners who are progressing, and you are able to make that informed judgement on their grade. You may need to claim twice, once for the learners who are not progressing and then for those who are.

Please provide more information about the calculated grade process.

Calculated grade looks at a range of evidence, the tutor assessment is a large part of it however without learner evidence to confirm this we will need to look at other activity to confirm the assessment judgements. This might be interim External Verifier (EV) reports, IQA documentation, learner observation records, references for the learner etc. We will also look at historical claims for your centre, the risk rating and quality assurance process. [You can find more information in the evidence guide found on the main VTQ page.](#)

How can we provide evidence before July if centres will not be reopening until autumn or beyond?

You have been asked to confirm what evidence you do have access to via your checklist. It is hoped that centres will be able to provide a range of evidence of quality assurance processes where they are unable to provide learner evidence directly. The use of interim EV reports from this year confirms learner assessment and the previous year's reports confirm consistency of assessment and will all be used. Once we have your checklist, we will be able to establish if we have sufficient evidence to make a judgement on.

The worst case scenario is that we need to wait until the centre is reopened to be able to access the evidence however for most centres, we do not envisage this being the case as there is plentiful additional supporting evidence that can be accessed.

When the learners are put in rank order, could two or more learners be ranked equally?

No, rank order establishes which learners would move grades if there was a moderation need to adjust and if



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two were on the same rank, we would not know which learner to move.

Because of the disruption, why can't we consider just PASS or FAIL grades for Level 3?

Unfortunately, due to regulatory controls, we are unable to change the grading plan for the qualifications.

Can we use post - 20 March - evidence if all learners stayed on programme, and does this deadline refer to the whole programme or to specific groups?

Evidence generated post - 20 March - must be able to be authenticated by the assessor and the centre must be sure not to disadvantage any learners who couldn't complete this work or who would have had more support in class to complete it than they have been able to access from home. Many centres are using this evidence to inform the grading judgement but are using pre-20 March as actual evidence.

I am a little confused about whether the Level 3: is it going to be a calculated grade, or will they have to sit the exam in January?

Level 3 exam (theory component) is a calculated grade therefore no exam will be sat. If a learner disagrees with the grade awarded for the exam, they can resit it. The other elements of this qualification are non-examined assessments. Centres and learners should use the provided assignment briefs to meet the criteria and present these to EV.

The year 1 Level 4 has learners usually sit an exam (Theory). Can they sit the exam later?

Yes, the Level 4 is a delayed programme, therefore the learners can continue with their learning and generating evidence. The exam will need to be sat later.

Do you have a deadline by which we need to submit the calculated grades?

19 June is our deadline (or inform us of a delay to the claim for mid-flight learners).

How should we combine individual journal grades into an overall grade?

Calculated grade looks at a range of evidence, the tutor assessment is a large part of it however without learner evidence to confirm this we will need to look at other activity to confirm the assessment judgements. This might be interim EV reports, IQA documentation, learner observation records, references for the learner etc. We will also look at historical claims for your centre, the risk rating and quality assurance process. You can find more information in the [evidence guide](#).

Can we tell learners their predicted grades?

No, the regulators have informed centres not to tell learners their grades.

Is there any need to complete an online Role Play Assessment for Level 3?

The skills element still must be assessed as this is a requirement of the qualification. Most centres are using zoom/teams to complete this. Please use the assignment briefs provided and present to EV.

Do learners need to do a Skills assessment if learners have not completed one before the 20 March?

You need sufficient evidence to make a judgement on their skills. Your own centres approach to this will determine if you are able to complete it with evidence post 20 March and if you have sufficient evidence to make a judgement on already.



Why can't you set up an online exam for Level 3?

This poses many challenges around authentication and invigilation and relies on all learners having access to the internet, a computer and a quiet place to work without children around. This would disadvantage some learners.

When does learner work need to be submitted and when will a decision be made regarding their grades?

Calculated grades need to be submitted by **19 June 2020** (or the intention to delay this claim if the learners are mid-flight). Decisions on grades will be made through a moderation process and will be released through the summer months.

I have some learners who needs lots of support and struggle with home working. How is this accounted for in re-evidence for predicting grades?

Where this is a calculated grade, the assessor should focus on the pre-20th March evidence and consider had the learner been in class what would they have achieved. Where this is a delayed claim, consider waiting until the restrictions have lifted to assess the learner and look at alternative assessment methods where possible, ie professional discussion.

Is there any specific guidance on how to assess the Counselling Skills component?

The skills element of the Level 3 qualification is a non-examined assessment, so there is no requirement to gather evidence to calculate grades. Centres and learners should use the provided briefs, which detail guidance and information on assessing these skills, and the mark sheet on these briefs provides the criteria in which the learner must meet.

REMOTE TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT

Should learners be continuing to work from home?

We appreciate that not all learners will have access to equipment or software to be able to continue with working at home and it is vital that learners in this situation are not disadvantaged.

Any evidence learners complete at home cannot be used as evidence of a grade achieved, however it can be used to inform your assessment judgement and reinforce your decisions.

Where a calculated grade is requested, we will only be accepting learner evidence that was completed before closures on 20 March 2020 for moderation.

Whilst we won't necessarily be using the assessment for evidence for awarding of grades, it is good practice for learners to be continuing with their studies in some form as this will help them build their portfolio for future employers or progression. It is important that where learners are progressing to the next stage of the qualification that they have the skills and knowledge to be able to cope with the next qualification.

The exception for this will be where all your learners are normally completing this online/remotely and you can be sure of the authenticity of the learner evidence.

Where a qualification is a delayed assessment, the evidence completed during the closure must be authenticated after closures have been lifted and can then be used.



Are we okay to do our training through video conferencing for the time being? (ie Zoom/Skype)

Centres should ensure that where this option is proposed, all learners are able to access their training remotely and they have sufficient equipment to do so. We would advise that centres ensure that their professional body also supports this and that they adhere to guidelines regarding safeguarding and confidentiality throughout this.

Are We required to provide a set number of learner/tutor contact hours? (ie Guided Learning Hours to learners). Will online contact hours count towards this and still be accredited through RQF?

GLH delivered remotely will still count as standard GLH. Guided learning hours are a guide and do not impact on the qualification achievement of your learners however you should ensure you are meeting the requirements of your funders.

DELAYED ASSESSMENT

Do we have to delay the assessment?

No, if your learners are completing as planned and you feel they are ready for completion, they will not need any delay. If your learner still needs to take an exam on a delayed assessment programme, this will be delayed and rescheduled, and you will be informed of the expected timescales as soon as we are able to do so.

Our learners do feel that they have been disadvantaged with their external assessment being deferred. Is there an option to conduct the Level 4 exam before the end of the academic year?

Our Regulators have stipulated not to change the format of the assessment therefore for the Level 4 diploma an exam is required. Administering exams during the current restrictions would go against the guidance from the government therefore would not be an option. Moving to an online exam would unfortunately disadvantage learners who were not set up for this (internet access, access to a computer etc) and has significant challenges for authenticity. It is also not possible for different centres to take exams ad hoc as this is a national exam with fixed dates and times which are agreed months in advance.

The remaining part of the qualification (non-examined elements) can be submitted for EV at any stage, therefore if these are completed and ready, these assessments could be credited, and the learners receive unit credits with just the exam left to take. The learners could contact their Level 5 qualification provider and ask if this would be accepted to progress whilst the qualification exam is completed as soon as is reasonably possible.

We are currently liaising with centres to establish when the best time would be to provide the delayed exam.

We understand how frustrating this is however we must be fair to all learners to ensure we do not disadvantage any of them.

I have year 2 Level 4 learners studying the old qualification who have failed twice and want to resit – when will this happen?

The learner will be able to resit on the delayed exam date, when available.



I have learners who were scheduled to resit in June. Can they do the resit in January?

Yes, they can do the resit in January or on the delayed exam date.

Is there any more detail regarding delayed exam scheduling, grades students will receive and the submission of evidence?

We are liaising with centres currently to identify the best date for the delayed exams to take place.

For delayed non-examined assessments, the centre should confirm they are ready for EV and [submit their eRAC](#) (and fill in the checklist to confirm they are applying a delay). This can be viewed by the EV as soon as you are able to do so.

For the calculated grade assessments, the centre should complete an evidence checklist to identify what is available for EV and complete the eRAC and upload both to the portal. Once we receive these, we will start arranging the EV process to ensure timely certification.

EXTERNAL VERIFICATION

Will there still be an EV for this year?

All evidence will be moderated and verified by the EV team at AIM. This will be managed centrally and not through your allocated EV, step by step instructions will be provided regarding what you will need to do for this. This will apply to both delayed assessment and calculated grade programmes.

For calculated grades, at present, you should be reviewing your evidence available and establishing how much falls into the Green column of your RAG rated evidence (see email sent to centres W/C 4 May 2020) and you will be asked to provide this alongside the calculated grade for all non-examined evidence and examined evidence at the end of May (this is waiting for a software update on the eRACs, as soon as it is available we will let you know).

Will learner portfolios be used as evidence?

This question does not apply to delayed assessment programmes as the portfolios must be completed as per the specification.

For calculated grade programmes, learner generated evidence that was completed before centre closures on 20 March 2020 can be used as evidence towards both examined and non-examined assessment. This should have been subjected to the usual quality assurance activity (IQA, standardisation etc).

Depending on the evidence generated, you may find it does support your calculated grades and this would be good practice to map it as additional evidence for the examined assessment.

Any learner evidence completed after 20 March 2020 cannot be used as evidence of achievement but can be used to inform your overall decision.

When learners are issued with final certificates, does it show a grade per component, or do they get an average grade?

The grades submitted, whether from actual EV'd evidence or predicted grades from exams, are combined in the usual way to arrive at the overall qualification grade.

The final certificate will show an overall grade and there will be unit certificates which show the grade per component. These will not identify if there is a calculated or delayed assessment.

When would you envisage 'results' to be available?

Throughout July and August.

Are Level 4 IV assessments to be scanned through for AIM inspection?

Level 4 will be subject to EV as per usual but at a later point, if you are ready now, you can submit for EV



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([upload the eRAC](#) and complete the [evidence checklist](#) to state delayed claim) and it will be actioned.

I am concerned about scanning work and sending to AIM – I am not on site and do not see the possibility of being able to do so for some time yet.

Please identify this on the [evidence checklist](#) and outline the evidence you do have access to electronically. We will then be able to establish if we have sufficient evidence to make a judgement on.

SUPERVISED PRACTICE HOURS

Can learners continue to work with clients?

Following the Government's guidance to stay at home unless absolutely necessary, we advise that centres should consult the professional body guidance and take appropriate steps to ensure that placement agencies are in a position to manage any counselling that is still taking place safely and ethically.

My professional body has stated that telephone/online sessions will count towards accreditation as long as they are sufficiently supervised. Will these count towards the 100 client hours needed for qualification?

Centres should consult their professional body guidance and take appropriate steps to ensure that placement agencies are able to manage any counselling that is still taking place safely and ethically.

Any placement hours must be carried out with genuine clients and not be a simulation, in an appropriate setting and with appropriate clients which match the learner's Level of competence (the training provider must ensure this) and be assessed and supervised. Assuming this can be evidenced and there is agreement from both the centre and their professional

body, the placement hours can be used towards the 100 hours.

Further guidance can be found from the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy and The National Counselling Society here:

[British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy Guidance](#)

[The National Counselling Society Guidance](#)

Has the submission deadline for the Study of Supervised Practice (SSP) been extended?

At the moment, the summer deadline of 14 June still applies; if learners do not gain their 100 hours of counselling practice by this deadline, they can still submit their work or opt for the January series submission deadline (14 January 2021).

Will the number of supervised hours for the qualification be changed?

No, learners must complete 100 hours. The requirement of 100 hours considers professional counselling bodies' requirements for the registration of counsellors.

What happens if learners cannot get their 100 hours of counselling practice in their placements?

Learners must make alternative arrangements to enable them to complete their supervised placement of 100 hours by following the centre's guidance (see above) or deferring the accrual of hours until social distancing measures are relaxed.

Properly authenticated hours can be submitted to claim the award once all assessment has been completed. Completing assessments (eg SSP) and submitting hours do not have to be synchronous.



Can learners use remote client sessions as part of the material for their coursework and submission of the 'Study of Supervised Practice' (including ethical dilemmas, using supervision etc) as a result of needing to move their practice online in their placements?

The placement hours can be used towards the supervision units in the same way as standard face-to-face sessions can.

Is there any further guidance regarding the maximum number of hours that student counsellors can use regarding telephone counselling as part of their placement?

The advice remains the same – follow the guidance given by the relevant professional body.

Is there a time limit within which the 100 client hours need to be completed?

The usual rules apply.

Where learners are several hours short of the required 100 in June, can we provide a 'provisional' achievement?

No, the 100 hours must be completed.

EXTERNALLY MARKED EXAMINATIONS - EXAM EVIDENCE

What type of evidence do you need aside from mock results?

All assessments will be being moderated at the same time therefore the exam evidence will need to be included with your assignment evidence.

Evidence that could be provided to predict the grades achieved for learners could be mock exams papers, mock exam results, standardisation records from the mock exam results, in-class assessments, your tracking data for your learners over the year, internal verification/standardisation records, IQA observations/quality focussed reports, teacher references of the learner, attendance records. You should look to build a case of evidence that shows how the learner has been progressing and achieving over the course of the programme.

Where a learner has not completed a mock but the rest of the cohort has, it is hoped that there is other evidence to show their progression compared to peers, for instance, in class tracking and feedback which would identify they are comparable to other learners of the same grade.

Where none of the cohorts have completed a mock exam, you should be looking to build evidence by looking at in-class assessments and completed tasks, it would be advisable to ensure these have been through an internal verification process.

Where there is not sufficient evidence for a cohort or individual, we may have to refuse to award a grade, therefore, we would in the first instance, identify as much as possible that you may have available. We will then review this and highlight the areas we feel would be best to submit for moderation.



We did mocks, but some learners did not do well, what opportunities are there for a retake in September?

Government guidance is that there will be opportunities for all to do resits in the next academic year and the planned dates for these can be found here: [AIM Qualifications Exam Dates](#).

Our qualification will be a delayed assessment, when will the rescheduled exam be?

Updated exam dates will be found on the AIM website, centres will also be informed directly when these are updated: [AIM Qualifications Exam Dates](#).

We are required to provide predicted grades for the Level 3 counselling theory exam. If we are using in-class assessments/assignments as evidence in this process, is there any guidance relating to the criteria to be used to determine grades achieved?

AIM has produced assessment criteria that can be used to help in determining predicted grades for the Level 3 Counselling Theory component that can be found [here](#).

The Level 2 Introduction to Counselling Theory component is not graded, so the learning outcomes as stated in the component can be used to predict a pass/fail.

If centres are using the outcomes of mock exams as a predictor of grades, these exams should be graded using the provided mock mark scheme and the following grading criteria.

40% = Pass

60% = Merit

80% = Distinction

REASONABLE ADJUSTMENT AND SPECIAL CONSIDERATION

Do we need to apply for reasonable adjustment or special considerations?

For learners on the delayed assessment, the reasonable adjustment/special consideration process will be applied as per the usual policy.

The process of applying calculated grades or adapting assessments are effectively AIM applying a reasonable adjustment/special consideration to the programme. At present, we do not envisage you needing to complete any reasonable adjustment or special consideration application for learners who are only requiring the calculated grade due to closures. If you have any learners who have additional extenuating circumstances that also need accommodating you should contact your named contacts at AIM for further information (your CEA or Centre Lead would be best placed to discuss this with).

Will we still be able to apply for reasonable adjustments as usual for the next season of exams?

Yes, next season of exams are currently planned to go ahead as per usual.