

Frequently Asked Questions – Private Candidates

For students

Who is classed as a private candidate?

Private candidates are candidates who have not studied with the exam centre which makes their entry. Included in this group are, for example:

- *School age students who have been home-educated;*
- *Adults who have studied independently;*
- *Students who have studied with a distance learning provider which does not offer exam entry;*

This guidance also applies to students at a school or college who have studied an additional subject outside of the school or college, and to former students who have returned to their school or college to resit a qualification.

I am a private candidate, what do I need to do?

If you are a private candidate who is not registered with a centre, sit tight and do not panic. By the end of March, we will provide a list of centres able to take on private candidates for GCSE, AS and A level. You will be able to use this list to contact centres who are offering the qualification you wish to take. If you are already registered, do work with your exam centre to make sure you are satisfied with the approach they intend to take to assessment and the charges they intend to make this year.

How can I find an exam centre which will accept my entry?

A list of centres accepting private candidates for GCSE, AS and A level will be available in a database on the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) website at the end of March.

You will be able to search for a centre by name, the qualification you wish to take with the relevant awarding body, and its location relative to your postcode, though some centres may also offer remote assessment.

When will the private candidate centre list be available on the JCQ website?

The list will be available by the end of March.

How will I be assessed as a private candidate?

Awarding Organisations expect centres to make clear how they will be assessing you.

You will be assessed this year on a range of evidence, in a similar way to other students in their schools and colleges.

Awarding organisations will be providing centres with additional assessment materials. Centres may want to base one or more assessments on these additional assessment materials or on available past exam papers. Further information on the additional assessment materials will be available at the end of March, including guidance on how centres can use the assessment materials to devise suitable assessments. In some cases, particularly where there is no suitable pre-existing evidence, centres might also wish to set you other assessments in order to ensure they have enough evidence to determine your grade.

You should only be assessed on what you have studied, like other students. This should be informed by an initial conversation your centre has with you, as well as any other pre-existing evidence you may have provided.

What if I am unable to sit an assessment at my exam centre?

Where a centre wishes to supervise an assessment, but you are unable to sit the assessment at the centre, you can be supervised remotely. Centres do not need to have specialist remote invigilation software – you could be observed remotely using standard video conferencing software (for example, Microsoft Teams or Zoom). Centres can choose whether or not to offer remote assessment.

Will it cost more this year?

The DfE has made a grant available to exam centres so that they can charge a similar rate to what they would charge in a normal year.

The DfE and the awarding organisations are working with centres to make sure enough centres are willing to work with private candidates.

Will all centres be able to accept private candidates?

All centres are able to accept private candidates, but some may choose not to. To help you find a centre to make your qualification entry, JCQ will publish a list of available centres by the end of March.

When is the entry deadline for summer 2021 private candidate entries?

This year, centres will be able to make private candidate entries up to 26 April, without incurring any late fees. Some centres may have earlier deadlines for accepting new private candidate entries.

What if I need reasonable adjustments?

You should discuss this with the centre before asking them to make your entry.

Can the centre charge me a fee to make a reasonable adjustment?

If the centre agrees to make a reasonable adjustment for you they should not charge you any additional fee for providing this.

If I move centres, can I transfer an agreed reasonable adjustment?

You should discuss this with your new centre as they will need to process a new online application.

We encourage centres to share evidence relating to reasonable adjustments where a student is transitioning between centres. You can help your new centre by telling them the reasonable adjustments you had for previous examinations. You should also tell your new exam centre of your former centre so that they can talk to them.

What if I'm already registered with a centre and now want to change? Can I transfer my entry and will I be charged?

You should discuss this with the centre that made your entry as they will need to withdraw your entry so that a new one can be made by your new centre. Awarding organisations will not charge centres fees for withdrawing an entry up to 26 April. We encourage centres to be flexible when a private candidate needs to transfer centres but we cannot intervene in individual cases.

What should I do if I can't find a centre willing to enter me for the qualification I have been studying for?

Check the JCQ list at the end of the month. If you are still unable to find a centre contact the awarding organisation for assistance.

Can I take exams in the autumn instead?

It is government policy that exams should take place in the Autumn. Ofqual has launched a [consultation](#), running until April 9th, on the specific arrangements for an Autumn 2021 series.

Can I submit work that I've already done as evidence?

You may have already generated a significant amount of evidence during your studies, including essays, assignments and mock exams.

Centres don't have to accept pre-existing evidence, but they should make that clear before they accept your entry.

Before your exam centre can decide on accepting pre-existing evidence, they need to consider the conditions under which it was produced and the level of confidence they can have in its authenticity. Further information is in the JCQ [guidance document](#).

How can I access past papers for practice?

Please discuss this with your centre once you have made an entry.

Does the centre have to accept my preferred evidence?

No, it is for the centre to decide what evidence it will accept, in line with the awarding organisation and Ofqual guidance.

Do I have to pay for qualifications this year?

Yes, private candidates are expected to contribute to the cost of their qualifications as in every other year. To avoid the extra costs of the additional requirements of assessing private candidates this year being passed on to candidates, the Department for Education are providing [funding for centres](#) and asking centres to charge candidates the same cost as a normal year.

FAQ for Centres**If I have made a private candidate entry and the student wants to move to a new centre, will I be charged for withdrawing the entry?**

No, awarding organisations will not apply charges for withdrawing an entry up to 26 April. We would encourage centres to be as flexible as possible in allowing students to change centres if they wish to.

If I accept a student after 31 March, can I still submit an access arrangement application?

Yes, an online application may be processed after 31 March provided the candidate meets the published criteria for the arrangement and the full supporting evidence is in place for inspection.

If one of my internal candidates wants to enter for a subject which they have not studied with us, are they classed as a private candidate?

Yes, the private candidate assessment guidance has been written to apply to this situation.

If a student that used to attend my centre wants to return to take a qualification but have not been studying with us, are they classed as a private candidate?

Yes, the private candidate assessment guidance has been written to apply to this situation, including where the student is resitting. Please see the [DfE guidance](#) for when a student can be included in a centres claim for funding.

If a private candidate submits a piece of work they have produced completely independently, how can I validate that it is the student's own work?

If the evidence was produced entirely independently, or set by the student's parent or family member, it should not be accepted. This is explained in the guidance.

One of my students wants to enter for a language we do not teach, how can we accommodate this?

There are a number of options. If the student has studied the language with an external educational organisation you may be able to accept that organisation's evidence and grading decision. Information about this is given in the JCQ guidance document.

Alternatively, you could consider identifying a suitable external assessor, perhaps from within your Academy chain, for example. You could apply for the DfE grant to help with the costs of this provided the other eligibility criteria are met. If you are unable to identify a suitable assessor yourself, you should contact the awarding organisation who may be able to assist.

One of my students has studied a language with a supplementary school but they are not DfE registered, can I accept their evidence and grading decision?

You can accept evidence and grading decisions from a supplementary school if they are recognised by an appropriate independent authority, provided that you have no grounds for concern about the authenticity of the work, and you obtain appropriate assurances from them.

The school does not have to be DfE registered. They may, for example, be subject to local authority oversight, or have engaged with a national or regional quality assurance programme such as that run by the National Resource Centre for Supplementary Education, or the Manchester Supplementary School Accreditation Awards.

If the school is a registered charity, and its governance is therefore subject to oversight by the Charities Commission, you may accept evidence and grading decisions provided you obtain additional assurances about the quality of teaching within the school. For example, the teaching staff may themselves be qualified teachers with a DfE registration.

Before accepting evidence from any external organisation where you do not have an existing relationship, in addition to obtaining the supporting statement referred to in the JCQ guidance, you should satisfy yourself that the approach to assessment meets the requirements set by Ofqual and the awarding organisations. This could be achieved, for example, by means of a professional discussion between your Head of Languages and the teacher who has conducted the student's assessment. You should also ensure that the evidence they submit is subject to your own internal quality assurance checks as far as possible.

Can I use the same external person carrying out GCSE speaking endorsements to provide teacher-assessed grades?

If you have a pre-existing relationship with a tutor it makes good sense to use them. You will, of course, need to ensure that the assessor is made fully conversant with the teacher assessment of grades guidance for GCSE and A level available from the end of March 2021 as well as being fully briefed on the assessment criteria and requirements of the specification.

Who can be an external language assessor?

Assessors would usually be a teacher or tutor of the language with a degree, other advanced level knowledge or native speaker competence in the language. They must not be a family member of the candidate and there must be no other conflict of interest that would prevent fair assessment. It is envisaged that students' work could be assessed remotely if necessary but, if any assessment needed to take place at the centre, you would need to supervise their presence at all times.

I have an internal candidate who is taking an additional subject not taught in my centre.**Does this guidance apply?**

Yes, these students are included in the definition of private candidates for the purpose of assessment this summer, but only for the subject which is not taught in your centre. However, you will not be able to use the private candidate flag for their entry as a candidate cannot be classed as both internal and private in the same series.

I am a DLP and have taught the candidate, but they would normally take their exam elsewhere. Should I use the private candidate flag when making their entry?

Yes, please flag these candidates as private candidates when you make their entries.

How do appeals and quality assurance work for private candidates?

Guidance on the assessment process for all candidates, including private candidates, is available at this link: <https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/JCQ-Guidance-on-the-Determination-of-Grades-for-A-AS-Levels-and-GCSEs-Summer-2021.pdf>