# Understanding your results: Level 3 Applied Certificates and Diplomas

The Results Report contains additional information to help you understand how have calculated your students' results, and the data we have used in the calculation. We have provided some data at both centre and candidate level, which is described below.

**Centre-level data**

The centre level data shows you the distribution of grades for your centre for each source of evidence used to calculate your students' grades. We have presented the information as tables and a graph.

*Historical data: your centre's results in recent years*

For Level 3 Certificates, we have used your centre's results in the same qualification in the June 2018 and June 2019 series, to 'standardise' your centre assessment grades. Here we have provided your centre's grade distribution in this subject.

For Level 3 Diplomas, we have used 18-year-old candidates' banked Certificate unit UMS scores, together with centre assessment grades and the rank order you provided, to calculate grades. Historical data for your centre is provided for information.

If your centre is entering this subject for the first time (with any board) then this table will be blank.

*Centre assessment grades (2020)*

This shows the distribution of centre assessment grades which you submitted.

*Prior attainment adjustment*

For Level 3 Certificates, changes in the prior attainment of your students compared to previous years have been used to adjust the grades awarded to your students. A positive number indicates an increase in prior attainment. The adjustment accounts for the proportion of candidates which could be matched with their prior attainment in 2020 and in previous years.

Please note, adding the prior attainment adjustment to the historical data (your centre's results in recent years) will not necessarily add up to your final calculated grades. This is

because, for example, the final calculated grades may have been adjusted to account for the size of your entry, and adjustments to outcomes nationally.

If we could not match any of your students to prior attainment data, this table will be blank.

*Calculated grades (2020)*

This is the distribution of the final calculated grades for your centre. These are the results that will appear on your students' certificates.

**Candidate-level data**

For each candidate, you can see the centre assessment grade and rank order which you submitted, together with the final calculated grade.

# How your grades were calculated

**Level 3 Certificates**

For Level 3 Certificates, most candidates do not have banked unit marks or grades to use as a basis for calculating grades. Grades were therefore calculated using a model similar to that developed by Ofqual for use in general qualifications.

Your centre's results in the same qualification in the June 2018 and June 2019 series were collated, and then the combined grade distribution was adjusted to account for the prior attainment profile of your candidates in previous series, compared with 2020. The prior attainment measure used is the candidates' mean GCSE scores. These are based on a common grade conversion which accounts for the fact that GCSE grade scales (9-1 for reformed Ofqual-regulated GCSES, A*-G for legacy GCSEs and reformed GCSEs in Wales and Northern Ireland) differed between qualifications in 2019, when the June 2020 17-year-old A-level cohort took most of their GCSEs.

*Initial calculation stage*

- For each centre, a harmonic mean of the total number of candidates entered for a qualification in the historical data, and the total number of candidates in the current series, was calculated. Any centre with a harmonic mean of 15 or higher was included in the initial run of the model. These centres are used as the basis for achieving the target grade distribution in the model. Private candidates were excluded from that part of the model.
- The centre performance projections were then adjusted according to the difference in the prior attainment profile of the prior attainment 'matched' 17-year-old candidates at the centre, in the current and historical examination series. The weighting of the prior

attainment difference adjustment is dependent on the proportion of the centre subject entry cohort that comprises matched 17-year-olds.

- The adjusted centre performance projections were then used to create a grade distribution for each centre, and grades are allocated to each candidate in the centre based on their rank order position.
- The initial standardised grade and rank order position were then used to derive an imputed score for each candidate.

*Grade distribution and adjustment stage*

'Grade thresholds' (the values at which scores are classified as representing one grade or another) were then set to assign all scores to a grade. It is possible to amend these values to bring overall outcomes closer to a predefined grade distribution. In the initial model run, the model parameters were set to award grades to a distribution close to outcomes in 2019.

*Final grade allocation stage (including small centres adjustment)*

Once grade thresholds are set, final grade allocations were produced for each centre, based on the imputed score distribution for their candidates. Grades were then distributed to the candidates included in the calculation stage of the model, based on the rank order provided by each centre.

Small centre cohorts – any centre with a harmonic mean of 15 or fewer entries between 2018 and 2020, for the years they entered candidates – had more weight placed on the centre assessment grades, due to the volatility in results over time experienced by centres with smaller cohorts.

*Slotting-in stage*

Candidates not included in the calculation stage of the model were 'slotted into' a grade according to their centre assessment grade (CAG) and rank order position, so that each of these candidates received the closest grade to their CAG which does not break the centre's rank order.

For example, for candidate X, if the candidate above X in the centre rank order received a grade B via the model, and the candidate below X receives an E, then if X's CAG is a B or better they will get a B; if it is E or worse they will get an E and otherwise they will be awarded their CAG on the basis that it falls between the grades for candidates ranked either side of X.

**Level 3 Diplomas**

For Level 3 Diplomas, most candidates have banked unit marks and grades from completing the Certificate units last year. This provides a valid and reliable basis for calculating grades, in line with Ofqual's principles. The method is very similar to that used to standardise A-level grades in Wales.

*Calculation stage*

In the first stage, for each 18-year-old candidate with all Certificate units banked from 2019, the sum of their units' UMS was calculated.

The mean and standard deviation of UMS marks achieved by 18-year-old first-time entrants in each Diploma-only unit in 2018 and 2019 was calculated.

The 2020 cohort z-scores were then combined with the A-level unit distribution parameters to produce an imputed score for each Diploma-only unit. The Certificate unit z-scores were multiplied by a Diploma-only unit's standard deviation (sd) and the outcome added to its mean (m): $(z \times sd) + m$.

An imputed score for each candidate was calculated by adding the Certificate unit score to the estimated Diploma-only unit scores.

Note that although these are calculated using candidate-level UMS-based z-scores, the imputed scores are not assigned to candidates, but represent a set of scores for each centre so that the centre's rank order is protected.

*Grade distribution and adjustment stage*

'Grade thresholds' were then set to assign all scores to a grade. It is possible to amend these values to bring overall outcomes closer to a predefined grade distribution. In the initial model run, the model parameters were set to award grades to a distribution close to outcomes in 2019.

*Grade allocation stage*

Once grade threshold values were set, grade allocations were produced for each centre, based on the imputed score distribution for their candidates. Grades were then distributed to the candidates included in the calculation stage of the model, based on the rank order provided by each centre.

*Slotting-in stage*

Candidates not included in the calculation stage of the model were 'slotted into' a grade according to their centre assessment grade (CAG) and rank order position, so that each of

these candidates received the closest grade to their CAG which does not break the centre's rank order.

For example, for candidate X, if the candidate above X in the centre rank order received a grade B via the model, and the candidate below X receives an E, then if X's CAG is a B or better they will get a B; if it is E or worse they will get an E and otherwise they will be awarded their CAG on the basis that it falls between the grades for candidates ranked either side of X.

**Overall check on results**

In line with Ofqual's requirements, an overall check on results was undertaken once the grade calculation process was completed. An analysis of outcomes, setting out aggregated entries and proposed grade distributions for a decision-making group led by the Responsible Officer to consider. Where outcomes were not well aligned with previous series, the model was adjusted to ensure comparability between years, using the grade thresholds. These decisions were taken by the Responsible Officer after consultation with the Standards Officer and subject teams.