# Bromcom

No.1 Choice for Cloud MIS & Finance

# A2C Exchange Guide
## Setting up and Using the Integrated Examination Submissions Process

# Contents

# Introduction

## What is the A2C Exchange?

As part of a broader project in conjunction with **JCQ** to improve communication with awarding organisations, Bromcom has developed an integrated transaction process which allows **Examination Officers** to submit files to and receive them directly from the principal awarding organisations, commonly called **EDI Transactions**. This process replaces the need to install the **A2C** transport app which is currently the standard secure way to send and receive **EDI** files. For the purposes of this guide, we will refer to the **A2C Exchange** when referring to the integrated process, to distinguish from the locally installed A2C app.

As the process uses the same method of communication employed by the A2C app, the cardinal rule is that only one process should be used for an awarding organisation. However, when you connect successfully to one, then rest assured you will be able to connect to all awarding organisations using **EDI**; namely **AQA**, **OCR**, **Pearson**, **CIE**, **WJEC** and **CCEA**. Other awarding organisations will eventually be added to the list but will not adopt **EDI** and these will form part of the broader **A2C project**.

Please see the following pages for instructions on how to set up Bromcom's **A2C Exchange**.

# Setting up the A2C Exchange
## Multiple Exam Centre Numbers

Bromcom MIS has an option to add an **Additional Centre Number** within its **Examination Configuration**. The **A2C Exchange** is <u>not currently</u> setup to handle this additional number where a separate awarding **Organisation Certificate** and **Password** has been issued for each centre.

To allow schools with **Additional Centre Numbers** to use the new integrated **A2C Exchange**, please contact each awarding organisation and request a single **Multiple Centre Certificate** and **Password**. This **Certificate** will identify both **Centre Numbers** thus enabling the integrated **A2C Exchange** for both.

**Note:** By **Additional Centre Number** we are referring to **National Centre Numbers** used in **EDI** transactions, and not the individual **Centre Numbers** assigned by other awarding organisations, such as **NCFE**.

## Step 1: Preparing to Connect

To connect to the **A2C Exchange** you must provide the awarding organisation **Access Key** (also called a **Certificate**) and **Password.** The process uses the same credentials for both the **A2C Exchange** and the A2C app. If you do not have these credentials noted down anywhere, please request a new **Access Key** and **Password** from each awarding organisation you wish to connect to.

The **Access Key** is in fact an encrypted file which you will be able to acquire from each awarding organisation.

If you intend to use a new awarding organisation not previously connected through the A2C app, then there is no need to disconnect it from the app. Simply, acquire the credentials and move to **Step 3**

## Step 2: Disconnecting from the A2C App

Once you have the **Access Key** and **Password** for an awarding organisation, the next step is to disconnect it from the A2C app service. To do this is a simple process of selecting the **Remove Awarding Organisation** option in the app.

If you are already connected to the awarding organisations using the A2C app, then you will be familiar with the **Status** process, displayed as **Ready** when the **Access Key** and **Password** has successfully been applied.

Within the **A2C app** select **Settings** from the **Menu**. Next choose the awarding organisation from the **Select awarding organisation** dropdown; click **Remove Awarding Organisation** and confirm **Yes** when the popover is displayed.
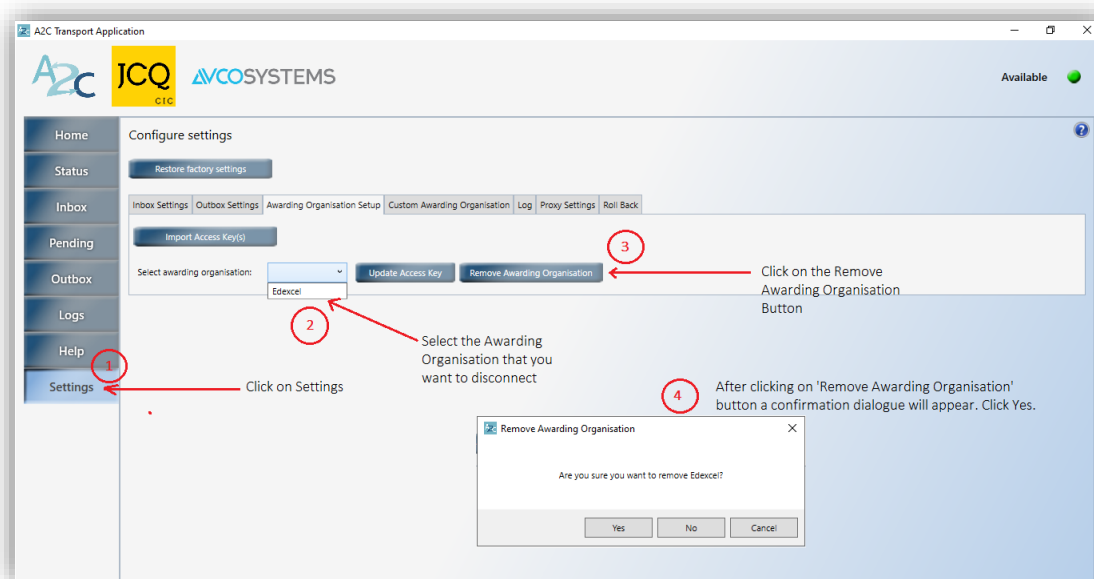


Repeat this step for each awarding organisation until the app has been in effect disabled. No further files will be sent or received using the app where the connection has been removed.

## Step 3: Setting up the A2C Exchange

Initially, access to the **A2C Centre Setup** page was restricted to selected schools who took part in a limited trial. If, for any reason, this page is still not available, please follow the instructions on the page so we can enable the service for you.

Appropriate permissions are required to access the **A2C Centre Setup** page which is available through the **Configuration > Examinations > Maintenance > A2C Centre Setup** menu.

If you are the **Examination Officer**, this permission should be available as default. If it is not, please contact your system administrator

There is no need to configure anything within your local network to set up the **A2C Exchange** and this process can be done without IT support

The awarding organisations listed will have an **Active** state and a connection **Status.** By default, these will be **No** and **Not Available** respectively.

To connect, simply left click on the awarding organisation to display the **Edit Awarding Organisation** panel

| Grid actions | Copy | Excel | CSV | PDF | Print | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Short Name** | **Full Name** | | | **Active** | **Status** | | **Centre Number** | |
| AQA | AQA - Assessment and Qualifications Alliance | | | No | Not Available | 🔴 | | |
| CCEA | CCEA - Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment | | | No | Not Available | 🔴 | | |
| CIE | CIE - University of Cambridge International Examinations | | | No | Not Available | 🔴 | | |
| OCR | OCR - Oxford, Cambridge and RSA Examinations | | | No | Not Available | 🔴 | | |
| **PEARSON** | **Pearson - BTEC and Edexcel** | | | **No** | **Not Available** | 🔴 | | |
| WJEC | WJEC/CBAC | | | No | Not Available | 🔴 | | |

Please leave **Centre Number** blank

| 💾 Save | ⊘ Cancel |
|---|---|

**Edit Awarding Organisation**

| Full Name | Pearson - BTEC and Edexcel |
|---|---|
| Short Name | PEARSON |
| Centre Number | |
| ☐ Active | |
| Access Key | ≡ Browse          Password |

When checking the **Active** tick box, the **Access Key Browse** button will activate. When adding the **Access Key** the **Password** field will become editable.

**Note:** Please type the **Password**. **DO NOT Copy and Paste** the **Password** as this may cause the connection attempt to fail!



**Save** the settings which will return you to **A2C Centre Setup** page and if the credentials are correct, the **Status** will change from **Not Available** to **Ready** with a green light indicator



You are now ready to submit and receive files using Bromcom's **A2C Exchange** for all awarding organisations with a **Status** of **Ready**

## Trouble with Connecting
### Failed Status

If it is not possible to connect initially to the awarding organisation the system will return a **Status** of **Failed**, following repeated attempts to connect. This occurs normally where the credentials are incorrect, for example when using an incorrect/expired **Access Key**. Please also see **Incorrect Passwords** below. In the first instance, we would suggest checking that the credentials are correct for the selected awarding organisation and trying again

If this still fails, the only other situation where the connection can fail is at the awarding organisation end, for example if their service goes offline for maintenance work. This will also return a **Status** of **Failed**.

In such cases, contact the awarding organisation to either request a new **Access Key** and **Password** or to establish if there is an issue with the awarding organisation service.

A **Refresh** button has been added to the **A2C Centre Setup** page which can be used if the **Status** changes from **Ready** to **Failed** for any reason, as described above.

| CCEA | CCEA - Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment | Yes | Failed | 🔴 | | ⟳ |
|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|

### Incorrect Passwords

When pasting a **Password** or typing it incorrectly, you will receive the follow message upon **Save** as this will prevent the service from connecting.
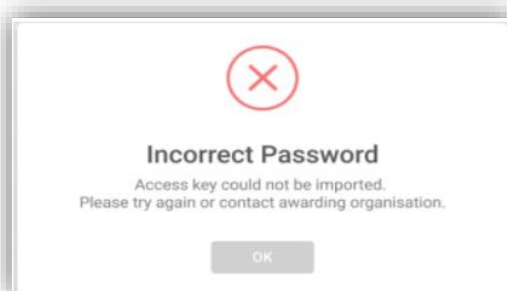


## Disconnecting from the A2C Exchange

There are very few situations where a user would wish to disconnect from the **A2C Exchange** once a connection to an awarding organisation has been made successfully.

**Note:** If you have sent files already using the **A2C Exchange**, these will not be available to re-submit using the A2C app. However, disconnecting from the **A2C Exchange** will revert the process to a manual state and all subsequent submissions or receipts would be managed manually using the app.

To **Disconnect** from the **A2C Exchange**, select an awarding organisation and simply untick the **Active** check box then select **Save**. This will set the **Status** to **Not Connected** and will return the **Submissions** page to a manual state, allowing files not already submitted to be downloaded ready for use with the A2C app.

| PEARSON | Pearson - BTEC and Edexcel | No | Not Connected | 🟡 | | |
|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|

Once an awarding organisation has been disconnected, the **A2C Exchange** will retain the **Access Key** and **Password** so that reconnection is a simple reversal of the process, by checking the **Active** box again and then selecting **Save.**
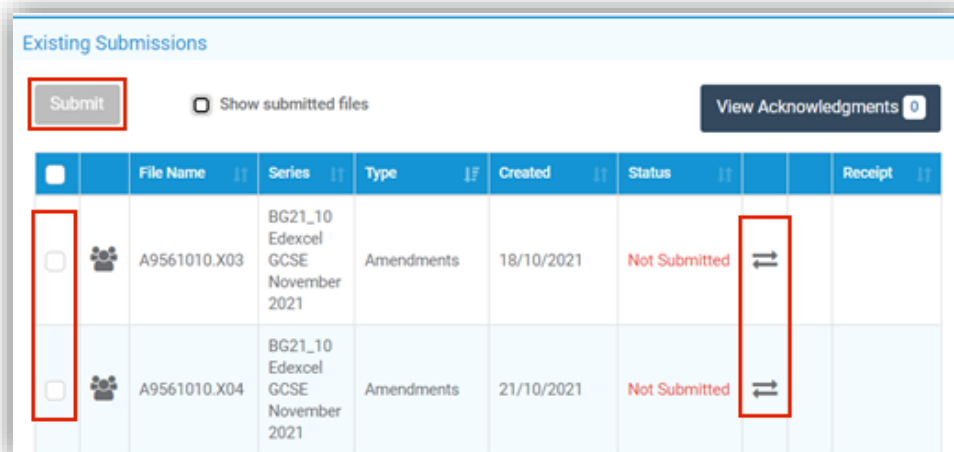
# Submitting Entries and Amendments
## Submissions using A2C Exchange

With the **A2C Exchange** configured for an awarding organisation, the only thing to change in **Manage Submissions** is the method of sending **Submission** files.
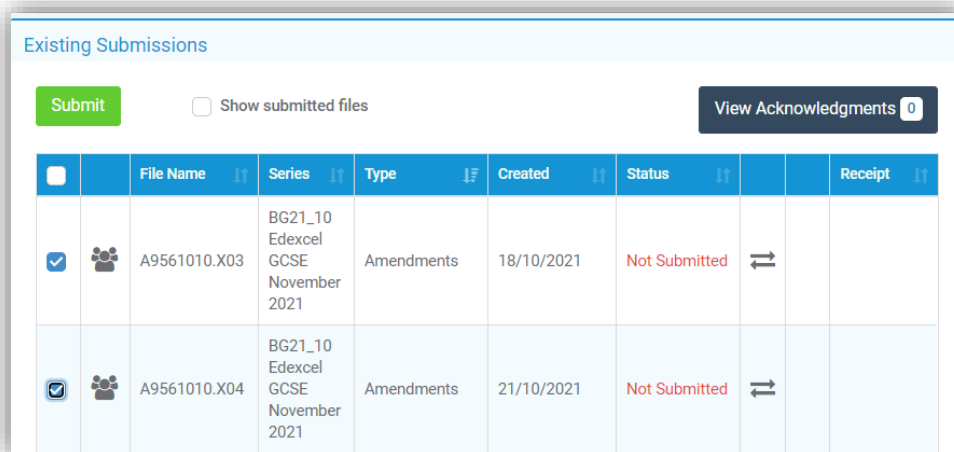
## Submissions

On the **Manage Submissions** page, an additional **Submit** button will appear above the **Existing Submissions** table and all submission files in an **Unsubmitted** state will have a checkbox on the left-hand side. 2 exchange arrows ⇄ will also be present instead of the usual download icon to denote that the file is using the **A2C Exchange** integrated process.



Tick the checkbox against one or more files to enable the **Submit** button which will turn green.



Click **Submit** to send the files which will change the **Status** to **Submitted.**



As the file has been submitted through the **A2C Exchange** it is no longer available to download and will have a tooltip message to that effect.



Files configured to be sent through the integrated exchange are not available for manual download.

## Receipts and Acknowledgements

Once **the A2C Exchange** has received confirmation of receipt by the awarding organisation, the **Receipt** column will be updated with the **Date** and **Time** automatically. The **Receipt** is confirmation that the file has successfully reached the awarding organisation.



Some of the awarding organisations also send an extra **Acknowledgement** file which confirms that the file is being processed. Use the **View Acknowledgements** button to view the latest acknowledgement files. An embedded counter will display the number of unread acknowledgements.



When selecting **View Acknowledgements,** a list of files received will be displayed.

Unread files are in **bold** and can be read by simply selecting them. This will display the message in the pane on the right of the page and at the same time change the status of the **Acknowledgement** to **Read**, reducing the **View Acknowledgements** counter accordingly. Files can be updated to **Mark as Read/Unread** by clicking on the message icon ✉
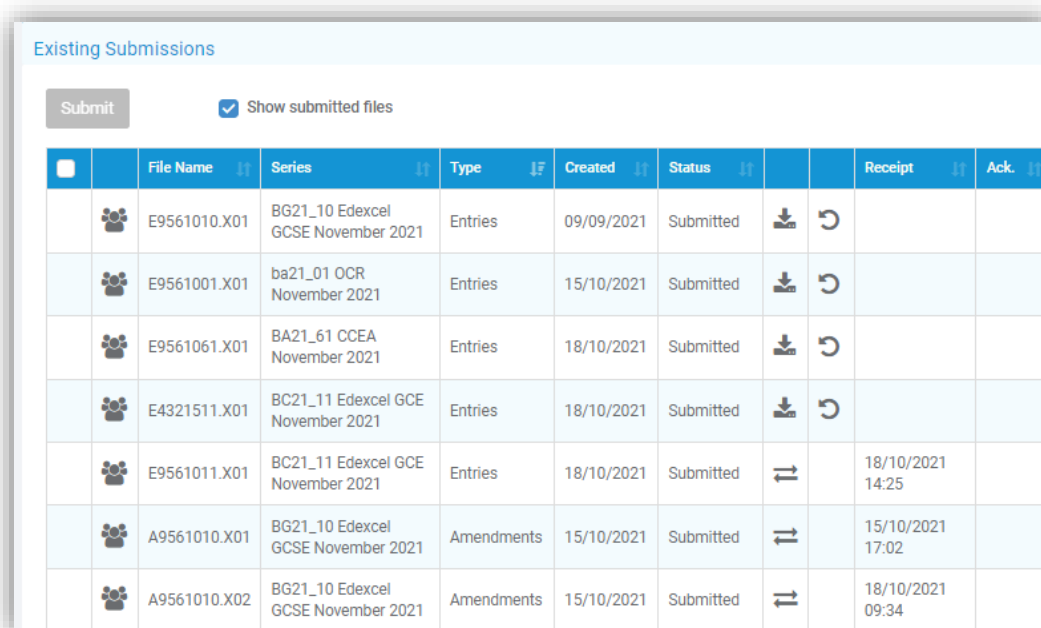
## Setup for both A2C Exchange and A2C App

As mentioned above, the cardinal rule is that only one instance of **A2C** (**Exchange** or app) is configured for each awarding organisation as, in effect, both mechanisms share the same channel for submitting and receiving files. This means there would be a risk of a file being issued to the wrong destination and thus appear lost!

Where both the **A2C Exchange** and the app are configured simultaneously for an awarding organisation, if the file is received in the app then it would be possible to disconnect from the **A2C Exchange** and upload manually as normal.

However, as the **A2C Exchange** is setup to submit and receive files, there is no need to have the app configured at the same time for that awarding organisation, which guarantees it is the **A2C Exchange** that receives the file.

It does not matter if some awarding organisations are setup using the **A2C Exchange** and others continue with the A2C locally installed app. Where a combination of **A2C Exchange** and app exists, all manual functionality will still apply for awarding organisations not connected via the **A2C Exchange**. It would also be possible to download any file before the integrated submission process has been setup whereupon subsequent files will be received by the **A2C Exchange**

### Existing Submissions

| | | File Name | Series | Type | Created | Status | | | Receipt | Ack. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ☐ | 👥 | E9561010.X01 | BG21_10 Edexcel GCSE November 2021 | Entries | 09/09/2021 | Submitted | ⬇ | ↺ | | |
| | 👥 | E9561001.X01 | ba21_01 OCR November 2021 | Entries | 15/10/2021 | Submitted | ⬇ | ↺ | | |
| | 👥 | E9561061.X01 | BA21_61 CCEA November 2021 | Entries | 18/10/2021 | Submitted | ⬇ | ↺ | | |
| | 👥 | E4321511.X01 | BC21_11 Edexcel GCE November 2021 | Entries | 18/10/2021 | Submitted | ⬇ | ↺ | | |
| | 👥 | E9561011.X01 | BC21_11 Edexcel GCE November 2021 | Entries | 18/10/2021 | Submitted | ⇄ | | 18/10/2021 14:25 | |
| | 👥 | A9561010.X01 | BG21_10 Edexcel GCSE November 2021 | Amendments | 15/10/2021 | Submitted | ⇄ | | 15/10/2021 17:02 | |
| | 👥 | A9561010.X02 | BG21_10 Edexcel GCSE November 2021 | Amendments | 15/10/2021 | Submitted | ⇄ | | 18/10/2021 09:34 | |

In the unusual situation that there is an issue with the **A2C Exchange**, disconnecting the service to an awarding organisation will release **unsubmitted** files and make them available again. This would only be possible if for any reason the file could not be sent. In this instance the **Status** on the **Existing Submissions** page would change to **Failed.** Check the **A2C Setup Status** of the awarding organisation first as it is likely there is a service issue.
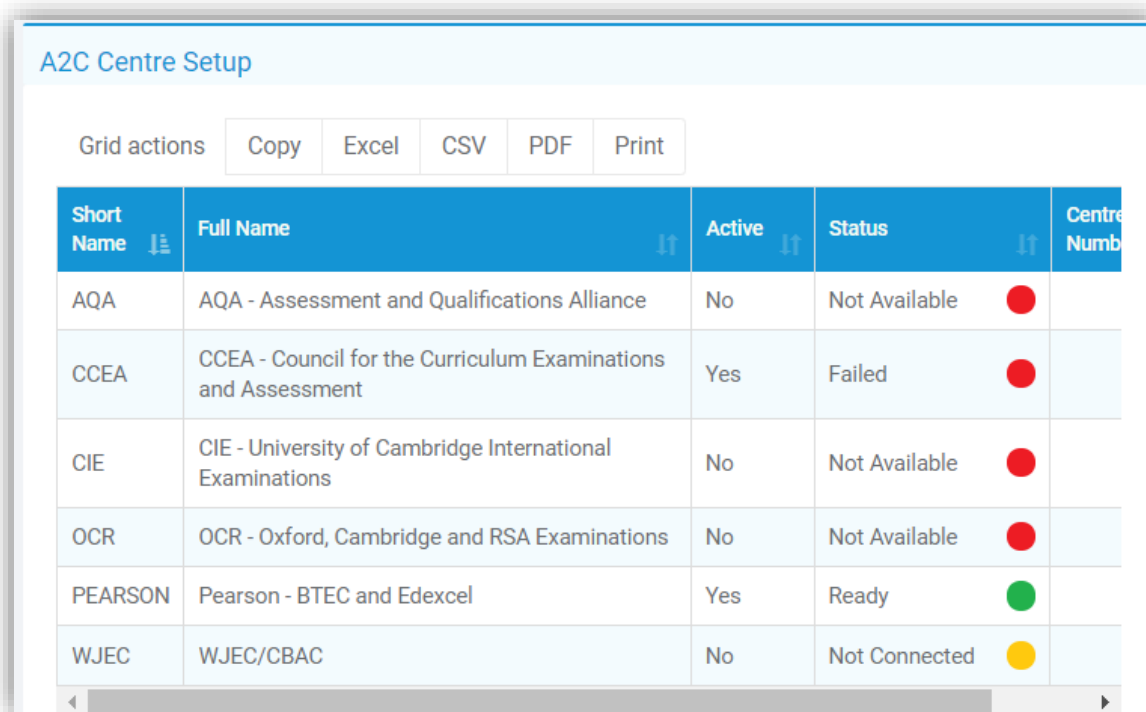
# Importing Results

**Importing Results** is straightforward using **Import Results** from the **Action** menu within the **Manage Results** page. Where an awarding organisation has not been connected to the **A2C Exchange,** the process of uploading results manually will remain unchanged. However, if one or more organisations are connected, the process for these changes slightly, as described below.

## A2C Exchange Results Process

## Preparation for Importing Results

As it is possible to have a combination of states for different awarding organisations, it is important to check the **Status** of each awarding organisation in the **A2C Centre Setup** page. This may be because the school does not use certain awarding organisations or some submissions have been made using the manual download process.

The **A2C Exchange** process will look to retrieve **Results files** for awarding organisations which are in a **Ready** state in the **A2C Centre Setup** page, regardless of how the initial submission was made.

### A2C Centre Setup

| Grid actions | Copy | Excel | CSV | PDF | Print |

| Short Name | Full Name | Active | Status | | Centre Numb |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| AQA | AQA - Assessment and Qualifications Alliance | No | Not Available | 🔴 | |
| CCEA | CCEA - Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment | Yes | Failed | 🔴 | |
| CIE | CIE - University of Cambridge International Examinations | No | Not Available | 🔴 | |
| OCR | OCR - Oxford, Cambridge and RSA Examinations | No | Not Available | 🔴 | |
| PEARSON | Pearson - BTEC and Edexcel | Yes | Ready | 🟢 | |
| WJEC | WJEC/CBAC | No | Not Connected | 🟡 | |

In the example above, only results for **Pearson** can be retrieved through the **A2C Exchange** as it is the only one in a **Ready** state. However, an attempt has been made to connect both **CCEA** and **WJEC/CBAC** so their state should be corrected if results are to be successfully retrieved using the **A2C Exchange.** Any awarding organisation in a **Not Available** state will be ignored and the manual results **Upload** process will be available for any **Exam Board** not in a **Ready** state.

## Importing Results using the A2C Exchange

**Importing** through the **A2C Exchange** works through the same **Import Results** action in the **Manage Results** page. Where no **Exam Boards** are in a **Ready** state**,** selecting **Import Results** will open that page directly and the process will be wholly manual.

However, selecting **Import Results** where at least one **Exam Board** is in a **Ready** state on the **A2C Centre Setup** page, an additional process will begin.

Firstly, **Results files** are not yet available. This could be because the **Import Results** process has been actioned before any **Results** have been released, or perhaps the wrong **Season** has been selected. It is most likely to occur though where the files are not yet available in the **A2C Exchange** and the following message will be displayed.
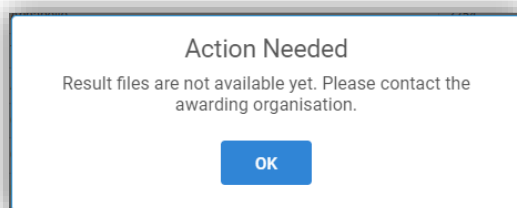


The assumption is that the **Examination Officer** has selected the correct **Season** and the **Results** are available, so the only remaining problem is that the **Results file** is not present in the **A2C Exchange**, a state initiated by the awarding organisation.

## Processing Results

When selecting **Import Results**, the system will display a message as it starts the check for **Results files** which will summarise the **Status** of the awarding organisations based on **Submissions** and their **A2C Status**.
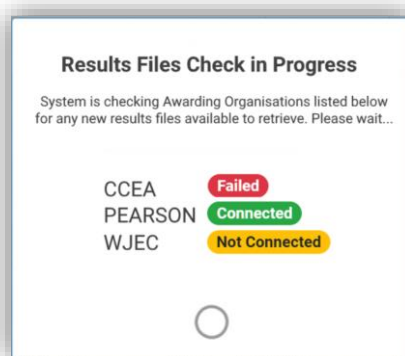


Once the check is complete, a second message returning the summary of **Results** retrieved will be displayed against each awarding organisation.
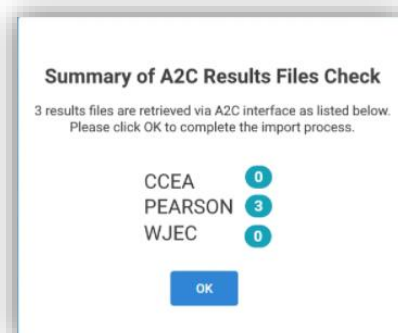
Clicking OK will close the message and open the **Import Results** page, where the retrieved **Results** file will be displayed in the **Import Results** window.



If all available awarding organisations are configured in the **A2C Centre Setup** page, no **Upload** button will be visible where all are in a **Ready** state. For **Results** to be imported, **Basedata** must have been imported for that season.

## Importing Component Results Files

From **Autumn 2021**, new **xml Component Results** files prefixed with "**a2c.**" will form part of the **EDI Results** process and these will also be handled using the **Importing Results** routine. When selecting a file for **Import**, a note will appear indicating that **Component Results** will be **Imported**.



The system will only display one file type (**EDI** or **a2c.**) however as the **a2c. file** also contains the **Award Results**.

As the **Components** equate mostly to **Exam** units, the existing **Results Overview** report will include any **Component Results.** This also applies where there are **Components** as well as **Exam Unit** options, both of which will be displayed in the report.



The additional **Component Results** data item has also been added to the **Ad Hoc Reporting Examinations** domain, if customised reports are preferred.

## Manual Upload of Results

**Note:** If the **Submissions** file has been sent through the **A2C Exchange** and then the awarding organisation has been disconnected subsequently, where the A2C app has not been reconfigured, the **Results file** will wait for a connection before being sent from the awarding organisation. It will not be available to **Import** in this case.

The **Upload** button will show in all scenarios except the one mentioned above and the process for **Importing Results** remains the same.

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