

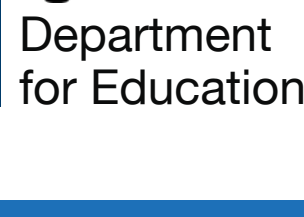


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Guidance

School and college responsibility for exams from January 2021

Updated 12 January 2021

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1. Main points

Students taking exams to improve their summer 2020 grades

In most cases, students used the grades they received in summer 2020 to move onto their next step.

There was also an opportunity for students to sit exams in autumn 2020 (for GCSE, AS/A level and some vocational and technical qualifications (VTQs) and other general qualifications) or at the first available opportunity in 2021 (for some other VTQs).

In cases where students wish to sit exams, we expect the school or college that entered them in summer 2020 to enter them at the next available opportunity and make sure they have somewhere to sit their exams.

The Department for Education (DfE) [exam support service](#) will continue to help schools and colleges to book sites and invigilators where required, for those qualifications in scope.

We expect schools and colleges to pay fees for all students who were due to sit exams in the summer, rather than passing the cost on to students or their families.

'Schools and colleges' in this guidance refers to:

- state-funded schools
- further education, sixth-form and specialist colleges
- apprenticeship providers who deliver functional skills qualification (FSQ) assessment in the workplace
- independent training providers
- adult and community learning providers
- independent schools
- private exam centres

2. Spring term 2021 exam arrangements

Following the cancellation of 2019 to 2020 academic year summer exams, students received their centre assessment grades, except where calculated grades were higher, in which case the calculated grades were awarded instead.

These summer 2020 grades were formal grades, with the same status as grades awarded in any other year, and the vast majority of students have been able to use them to move on to their next steps.

We announced that there would be an [opportunity for students to sit exams in autumn 2020](#) and for some VTQs in the spring 2021 term. These exams would act as a backstop to the summer arrangements.

Students will be able to sit them if they are unhappy with their summer grade, or if they need an improved result to move onto the next stage of their education. There will also be a small group of students for whom there was not enough evidence for a grade to be awarded in the summer. It is particularly important that these students are able to sit exams in autumn 2020 or spring term 2021.

This guidance sets out schools' and colleges' responsibility for entering students for the exams in scope, and how the cost of fees will be covered.

Students taking exams in spring term 2021

This guidance relates to all schools and colleges that are approved to deliver GCSE, AS and A level and VTQs exams and assessments, whether or not they are state funded. This guidance also relates to apprenticeship providers who deliver FSQ assessment in the workplace, who are approved to deliver FSQs in English and maths at level 1 and 2, and where the apprentices usually undertake the FSQ exam in their workplace, and an exam is due to be taken between 1 August 2020 and 31 March 2021.

It should be read alongside the following wider guidance:

- [Ofqual's decisions on its consultation on an additional GCSE, AS and A level exam series in autumn 2020](#), including the decision that exams should be available in all subjects
- [guidance for full opening for schools](#) and [full opening for special schools and other specialist settings](#) or for [further education \(FE\) operational guidance](#) for information about how to operate safely and follow guidelines set out by Public Health England
- [guidance on public health arrangements for exams from January 2021 onwards](#)

For those VTQs and FSQs in scope, exams officers should ensure they are familiar with relevant guidance published by the awarding organisations they are working with.

3. Responsibility for entering students for autumn exams

We expect the exam centre that entered students for the summer series to enter them for exams in scope for funding from the exams support service ([with the exception at 4. below](#)). In the great majority of cases, the school or college that the student attended will know them, will have existing links with the relevant awarding organisation and will be aware of any reasonable adjustments that are needed.

We expect exam centres to extend these arrangements to students who were private candidates in summer 2020 (candidates who were not on roll but for whom they had made, or intended to make, an exam entry), as well as for students who were on their roll. This continuity will be especially important for some private candidates since it is more likely that there will not have been enough evidence to provide them with a summer 2020 grade, so exams will be essential for many of them.

We appreciate that there will be cases where students and exam centres will want to agree different local arrangements between themselves. This will often be sensible - for example where a student has moved and it is a better experience and more practical for them to sit the exams at the new institution. However, our expectation is that the original exam centre will take overall responsibility for ensuring that the candidate has somewhere appropriate to sit their exams if they wish to do so. Where a different arrangement is made, we expect the original exam centre to be responsible for contacting the new institution and ensuring that students taking exams are content and are not charged exam fees.

4. The DfE exam support service

The DfE [exam support service](#) will continue to help schools and colleges to book sites and invigilators where required for exams in scope. We expect schools and colleges to pay fees for all students who were due to sit exams in the summer, rather than passing the cost on to students or their families.

Exams in scope for funding from the exam support service are the additional GCSE, AS and A level where students received grades in summer 2020 and there was a scheduled assessment opportunity for the qualification in autumn 2020.

VTQs and other general qualifications at level 1/2, level 2 and level 3, where students received grades in summer 2020 and there is a scheduled assessment opportunity for the qualification in either the autumn 2020 or spring term 2021 series are also in scope of the exam support service. Support can also be claimed for FSQs where the apprenticeship training provider usually delivers the exams to the apprentice in their workplace. Other VTQs are not in scope.

Information on [how to make claims for exams](#) is available.

Schools and colleges can also use the DfE service to book sites and invigilators for other exams and assessments, but these will not be funded by DfE.

Read the DfE [exam support service](#) guidance.

5. Responsibilities for paying fees

The awarding organisations are responsible for their own approach to charging fees for exams. We anticipate that they will charge fees for exams in the 2020 to 2021 academic year in the usual way.

However, the government is clear that given the unique circumstances arising from summer 2020 awarding, students themselves and their families should not have to meet the cost of fees if they want to enter to improve their summer 2020 grade.

We expect schools and colleges to pay fees for students whom they are entering for exams, whether or not those students are on their roll. Schools and colleges should not face additional costs for fees, over and above what they would have paid had summer 2020 exams gone ahead. The DfE exam support service will provide funding for exams in scope, if needed, to ensure that schools and colleges do not incur a net loss, taking their fees for these exams and any rebates or credit notes they receive in respect of summer 2020 exams together. This will also apply to fees incurred for entering students in the spring term 2021 to sit VTQs for which they received results in summer 2020. This does not apply to FSQ assessment fees, as providers will cover these as usual via their ESFA funding agreements.

DfE will not provide funding in relation to any administrative fees charged by schools and colleges, over and above the fees charged by the awarding organisations. We do not expect schools and colleges to charge administrative fees to students who were on their roll in summer 2020. Where private candidates have already paid an administrative fee for summer 2020, we would not expect them to be charged twice.

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