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Guidance

Student guide to exams and formal assessments in 2021 to 2022

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Arrangements for exams and assessments are a little different this year from other years when exams have gone ahead. This is to take account of the disruption to education caused by the pandemic.

This guide explains what is in place to support you in taking exams and assessments. It also provides other information about this year's arrangements.

This guide is for students taking any of these qualifications:

- GCSEs
- AS or A levels
- other general qualifications, including International Baccalaureate, core mathematics and Pre-U
- vocational and technical qualifications, including T Levels
- a combination of these qualifications

We state where any information only applies to a certain type of qualification. If you are not sure exactly which qualification you are taking, you should check this with your school, college or other exam centre.

The information in this guide about arrangements for vocational and technical qualifications also applies to other general qualifications, including the International Baccalaureate, core mathematics and Pre-U.

We call schools, colleges and other exam centres '**centres**' in this guide.

We talk about **awarding organisations** and **exam boards** in the guide. All organisations that offer qualifications regulated by Ofqual are awarding organisations. The 4 awarding organisations that offer GCSEs, AS and A levels in England are commonly called exam boards.

There is more information about different types of centres and about awarding organisations, including the exams boards, in the **further information** section below.

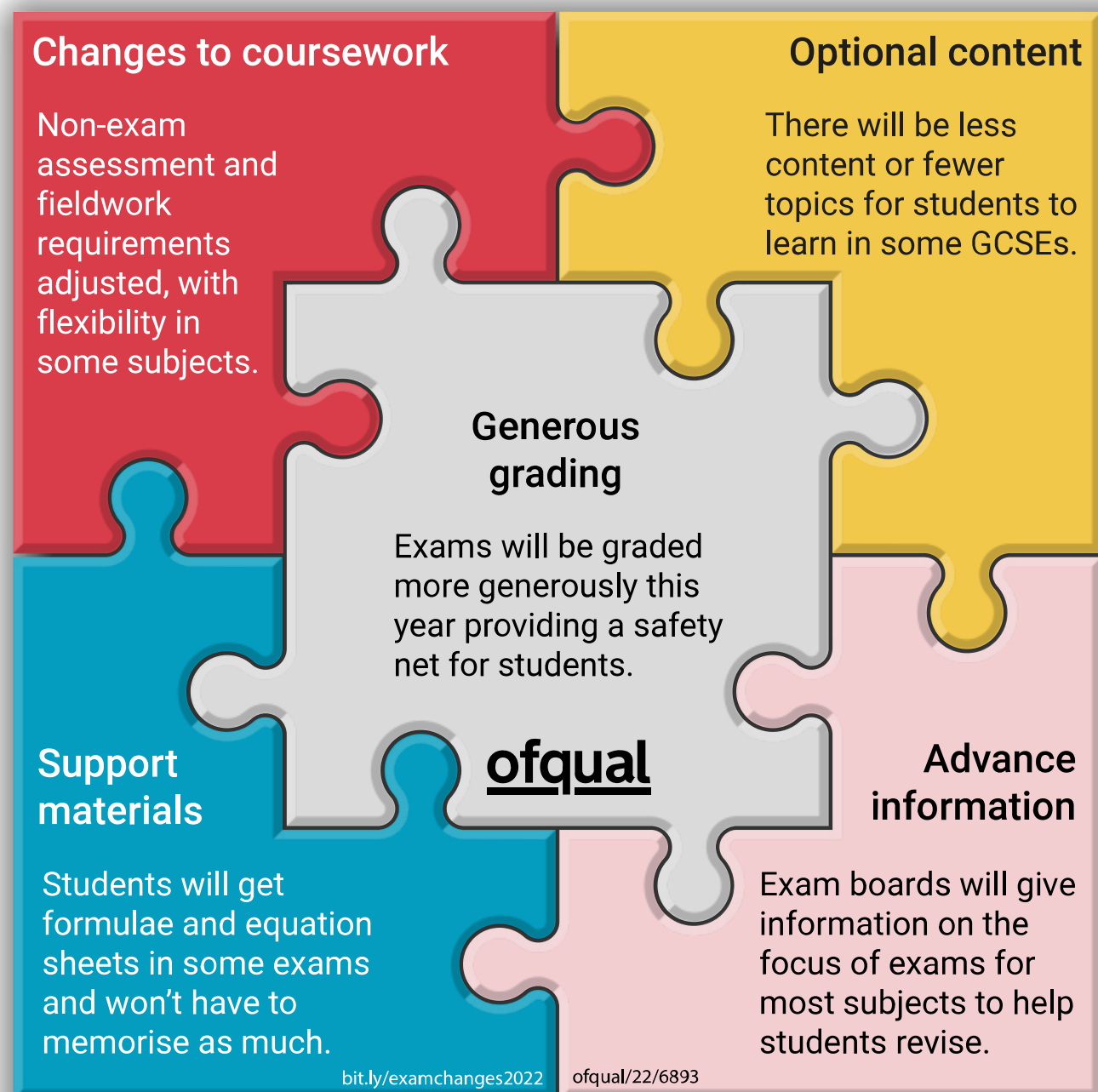
Support for students taking exams and formal assessments in 2022

We understand that students taking exams and assessments this year have been affected by the pandemic. That is why we have made changes to the arrangements for exams and formal assessments.

The support that has been put in place is designed to be appropriate for the particular qualifications you are taking.

Changes to GCSE, AS and A levels in summer 2022

There is a package of support in place for all students taking GCSE, AS and A level qualifications this summer.



An [accessible version of this diagram](#) is available.

Exam boards have published **advance information** about the exams to help you focus your revision. It is published on their public websites, and your centre can also show you where to find it.

There is advance information for all AS and A level exams.

Students will be assessed on less content this year in GCSEs in English literature, history, geography and ancient history. Therefore, there is no advance information for these GCSE subjects. There is advance information for all other GCSE subjects.

Exam boards have worked together to develop advance information that is appropriate for each subject and specification. There are differences in advance information between subjects and, in some cases, even between different exam boards' specifications in the same subject. This reflects differences that already exist between over 300 GCSE, AS and A level qualifications.

Advance information is to help you focus your revision, rather than reduce what you cover during your course.

You can read more about advance information in the Joint Council for Qualifications' (JCQ) [FAQs for students](#).

We have published a [subject by subject guide to all the changes](#). Some of the changes are explained below:

- GCSE mathematics: you will be given a sheet in the exams showing the formulae you might need to use so you don't have to memorise as much

- GCSE physics or combined science: you will be given a sheet in the exams showing the equations you might need to use so you don't have to memorise as much. You can see what these formulae and equation sheets will look like on the exam boards' public websites
- science subjects: teachers have been allowed to be more flexible in the ways they teach practical skills
- subjects with non-exam assessment (for example, dance, design and technology, drama, food preparation and nutrition, music and PE): Changes have been made so the assessments could be completed despite restrictions caused by the pandemic
- GCSE, AS and A level art and design: you will be assessed on your portfolio only – you will not need to complete a task set by the exam board

If you want to know more, your teachers will be able to explain the changes to each of your subjects. You can also find [more information on the 2022 changes to exams](#) and [changes to non-exam assessments](#) on our website.

Changes to vocational and technical qualifications in 2021 to 2022

Awarding organisations can continue to adapt exams and assessments in vocational and technical qualifications this year, to take account of the disruption caused by the pandemic.

It's important that your results reflect what you know and can do, and that you are ready and able to progress onto the next stage of your education, training or employment. For this reason, Ofqual has set out the ways in which awarding organisations can adapt their assessments for these qualifications.

We expect your teachers to still teach all of the course content so that you are well prepared and have all of the knowledge and skills that you need for your next steps.

We expect awarding organisations to work with centres, to make sure that, wherever possible, qualifications that have similar purposes and assessment methods are adapted in similar ways.

Each awarding organisation knows the kinds of adaptations that are best for its qualifications. Adaptations could include changes to the way your assessment is run, changes to the method of assessment, such as replacing a face-to-face assessment with a remote assessment, or it might include giving you advance information.

Your centre will know details of the adaptations put in place for your qualification. If you have any questions about how you will be assessed this year, please speak to your teacher.

Students taking vocational and technical qualifications this year that have already completed some of their assessments in other years

If you are expecting to finish your vocational and technical qualification this year (or at some time in the future) and you did some of your exams or assessments in either the academic year 2019 to 2020, or 2020 to 2021, you can use all of the results you have achieved so far.

This includes students who did an adapted assessment or received a centre

assessment grade (CAG) or teacher assessed grade (TAG) in previous academic years.

In the same way, if you are starting your vocational and technical qualification this year, then your results from any adapted assessment can count towards your final result when you complete your qualification.

T Level students

The Technical Qualification part of the T Level has two different types of assessment. The **core** assessment assesses the knowledge, understanding and skills you need in your chosen area, and the **occupational specialism** assesses the specialist knowledge and skills you need for your chosen career.

If you are taking a **core** assessment this year then, as with other vocational and technical qualifications, there may be adaptations in place. If you are taking an **occupational specialism** assessment, then it is likely that your assessment will go ahead as planned. Your teacher will be able to explain how you will be assessed this year.

What you should know before your exams and formal assessments

For many of you 2022 will be the first time you are taking formal exams and assessments, and so you may not be familiar with what happens.

Your centre will enter you for the exams and assessments for the qualifications you are taking. If you're not sure exactly which qualifications you are entered for, or with which exam board or awarding organisation, you should check this with your centre.

Some GCSE subjects have different tiers of entry (foundation or higher). The subjects with tiers of entry are:

- maths
- combined science
- physics
- chemistry
- biology
- statistics
- modern foreign languages

Your centre will decide whether to enter you for foundation or higher tier.

- foundation tier: students may be awarded grades 5 to 1 (5-5 to 1-1 in combined science)
- higher tier: students may be awarded grades 9 to 4 (9-9 to 4-4 in combined science). Students who just miss a grade 4 (4-4 for combined science) may be awarded a grade 3 (4-3 for combined science)

Before your exams you should make sure you know which tier you have been entered for so that you can prepare for, and sit, the correct exam paper.

If you are taking vocational and technical qualifications, your teacher will tell you how and when you will be assessed for your qualification, including any adaptations that have been put in place by your awarding organisation.

Reasonable adjustments

Reasonable adjustments are changes made to an assessment, or to the way an assessment is carried out, to make sure that disabled students, including students with a learning disability, can show what they know and can do. Reasonable adjustments are sometimes called access arrangements. Some of the most common adjustments are:

- changes to exam papers, for example, large print or braille
- help with specific tasks. For example, another person might read questions to you or they might write your dictated answers
- extra time to complete assessments

You can ask your teacher or your special educational needs and disabilities coordinator (SENDCo) for more information about reasonable adjustments and whether they apply to you.

Special consideration

You can ask your centre whether you might qualify for special consideration if:

- you temporarily experience an illness or injury at the time of your exams, or
- something that you could not prevent happens during or immediately before a scheduled exam that affects your ability to take the exam, or
- something that you could not prevent happens during or immediately before a scheduled exam that could affect how you perform in the exam

Your centre can ask the exam board or awarding organisation to take account of such an event.

The exam board or awarding organisation will decide whether an adjustment should be made to the way you take the exam or are assessed, or whether you should be given a small number of extra marks — or, for certain vocational and technical qualifications, if you should take your exam or assessment at a later date.

Special consideration is only for things that happen immediately before or during an exam or assessment that affect your ability to take that exam or assessment, or could affect how you perform – for example, an injury or illness, or the recent death or serious illness of a close family member. You will not be able to apply for special consideration because your education was disrupted, either by the pandemic or for any other reason.

For GCSEs, AS and A levels you may wish to read the [JCQ guidance on special consideration](#).

Private candidates

Private candidates are typically home educated or students who are re-taking a qualification after leaving the centre where they originally studied for the qualification(s). They may be studying with a distance learning provider, tutor, parent, or without any support.

If you are a private candidate, you should register to take your exams at a centre.

[JCQ has published a list of centres](#) that will make exam entries for private candidates for GCSEs, AS and A levels in 2022. Centres that are not in the JCQ list might also

make entries for private candidates — they do not need to be on the JCQ list to do this.

Advance information for relevant exams is published on the exam boards' public websites so that you can access it in the same way as all other students.

If you are a private candidate studying for a vocational or technical qualification, you should contact your awarding organisation. They will be able to tell you about local centres who can make entries for private candidates for the qualification you are taking.

During exams and formal assessments

Exam timetable

Your centre will normally give you your exam timetable, and you should check this carefully. If you miss an exam, because you didn't know the date or time of the exam you won't get any marks for it.

If you think there are mistakes in your timetable, ask your centre to check. You should also check with them if you are not sure about the timing of any exams.

GCSE, AS and A level

GCSE, AS and A level exams will be held between 16 May and 28 June 2022. Details of the full exam timetables are on the exam boards' websites:

[AQA](#)

[OCR](#)

[Pearson](#)

[WJEC Eduqas](#)

All dates and deadlines for the main examination series of GCSE, AS and A levels in 2022 are on [JCQ's website](#).

You should be available for the whole exam period, from 16 May to 28 June, and also on 29 June which has been scheduled as a contingency day.

If there had to be a change to the exam timetable because of significant disruption, an exam could be moved to any other date during the exam period, including the contingency day on 29 June. Therefore, it is important that you're available and avoid booking any holidays, or committing to any plans that you can't change between these dates.

You should make sure that you know the rules for your exams – including the list of items that you must not take with you into the exam. JCQ has produced [information for candidates](#). If you're not sure about any of the rules, you should speak to your teachers.

Your centre is responsible for administering the exams. If you have any concerns about how an exam is run, you should tell your exams officer or a teacher. If you would rather not talk to your centre, you can contact the relevant exam board or

Ofqual.

If you think there is a mistake in an exam paper, you should tell someone in your centre as soon as possible.

Vocational and technical qualifications

Vocational and technical qualifications range in size and structure and are assessed in various ways, including by exams. Your awarding organisation will have decided the best way for students to be assessed for the qualifications it offers. This could include assessments that are taken at the point when you are ready, or at set times in the year. Please speak to your centre for more information about how and when your assessments will take place.

What happens after you have taken your exam or formal assessment?

Marking and moderation

For GCSE, AS and A level qualifications, exam boards mark students' completed exam papers. Examiners are mostly experienced teachers and do most of their marking on-screen. Examiners' work is quality-checked by the exam boards to ensure their marking is consistent and to the required standard.

If your qualification includes non-exam assessment — for example practical work or a performance — this may be marked by the exam board, or by your teacher. If your teacher has marked your assessment, you are entitled to know your marks. If you do not think your mark is correct, your centre must allow you to ask for a review of your teacher's marking before your marks are given to the exam board. Your work will be reviewed by someone who was not previously involved in the marking. Speak to your centre for information about how to do this.

Exam boards moderate your teacher's marking of non-exam assessments for GCSE, AS and A levels so they can make sure that it is consistent across centres. Exam boards moderate by looking at a sample of work that the teacher has marked, to check that the marking is in line with the national standard. If it isn't, they will adjust the marks given by the teacher.

Vocational and technical qualifications are assessed in many different ways. The way a qualification is marked is designed to suit the purpose of the qualification and how you have been assessed. The awarding organisation will have decided how it is marked. It has to do this in line with our rules, making sure it best reflects what you know and can do.

Grading

When exam boards determine grades, they do this by setting grade boundaries. Grade boundaries are the minimum number of marks needed for each grade.

In 2022 examiners will set grade boundaries after they see how students have answered exam questions. This is what happens every year that students take

exams.

Examiners will be more generous when setting grade boundaries than they were in 2019, when summer exams last took place. This will provide a safety net for students who might otherwise have just missed out on a higher grade.

In 2020 and 2021, when GCSE, AS and A level grades were determined by teachers, national outcomes were higher than is normally the case.

This year, for GCSE, AS and A levels, examiners will aim for a national grading standard at a midway point between the results in 2021 and those in 2019.

Grading will be monitored by the experts at the exam boards every step of the way and, as usual, Ofqual will review results for each subject before you get them.

Our aim is to return to the pre-pandemic (2019) grading standard — but we don't think it would be fair on you to do that all in one go in 2022 because your year group's education has been disrupted by the pandemic. In 2023 we aim to return to results that are in line with those in pre-pandemic years.

For vocational and technical qualifications, we expect awarding organisations to take account of the grading approach for GCSEs and A levels when setting standards in their own qualifications.

You can [read more about the approach to grading in 2022](#) on the Ofqual website.

Getting your results and your next steps

Getting your results

A level and AS results will be released on **Thursday 18 August 2022**.

If you are studying a level 3 vocational and technical qualification and are planning to use your results to go on to further or higher education, you should also receive your results on or before this date.

GCSE results will be released on **Thursday 25 August 2022**.

If you are studying a level 2 vocational and technical qualification and are planning to use your results to go on to further or higher education, you should also receive your results on or before this date.

Your centre will receive your results and it will tell you how and when you can collect them.

For vocational and technical qualifications, the date you receive your results will depend on the qualification you are studying, the way it has been assessed and the awarding organisation. Some qualification results will be available through the year as they normally are. Your teacher will be able to tell you when you will receive your results.

If you have concerns about your results

If you have concerns about your results you should first speak to your centre who will

be able to help you.

GCSE, AS and A level students

If you think there has been a mistake in the marking of your exams, you should talk to your centre. They can ask the exam board to check how your exam was marked.

Your centre can also ask, on your behalf, to see your marked exam paper. They can do this before deciding whether to request a review of marking to help to identify whether they think a mistake was made when your work was marked.

If you are a private candidate, you can contact the exam board directly to request your marked paper or a review of marking.

If the exam board does not find any mistakes, your mark will not change, and therefore your grade will not change. If the exam board finds a mistake was made, your mark could go up or down. If your mark changes, this could mean that your grade stays the same or goes up or down.

An exam board cannot give you extra marks just because your mark was close to a grade boundary or because you did not get the grade your centre predicted.

Your centre can also apply for a review of moderation of non-exam assessment that was marked by your teacher, if marks were changed by the exam board following moderation. This review would apply to all students taking the qualification at your centre, not just to you.

If the exam board finds a mistake was made with the moderation, your grade could stay the same or go up, but it cannot go down. This is because the review affects many students, and centres may not be able to get permission from everyone to request the review.

The exam board may charge fees for reviews of marking or moderation if your grade does not change. There will be no fees if your grade changes following a review. Your centre will be able to tell you about any possible fees that you may need to pay.

You can request a priority review of marking if you are depending on the outcome of a review to secure a higher education place. Exam boards will aim to complete priority reviews by **7 September**, which is UCAS's advisory deadline for higher education providers to hold places open for students.

If you and your centre still have concerns after a review of marking or moderation, the review decision may be challenged through the exam board's appeals process. The possible outcomes of an appeal are the same as at the review of marking or review of moderation stage, explained above. Your centre will be able to tell you about any possible fees that you may need to pay.

The exam boards will publish details of the deadlines for seeking reviews of marking or moderation, and appeals, on their websites.

Your centre can also challenge exam boards' decisions about reasonable adjustments, special consideration and malpractice.

If your centre thinks the review of marking or moderation and or appeal were not completed properly, they can ask Ofqual to review the case. This is called the exam procedures review service (EPRS). An application can only be made to EPRS after your case has been considered at the exam board's final appeal stage, which is often called a Stage 2 appeal. There is no fee for the EPRS.

The EPRS will look at whether the exam board has followed Ofqual's rules and its

own procedures. We will not review your work and we cannot change your grade. We can ask the exam board to look at your appeal again if we think the exam board made a mistake when it completed the review of marking or moderation, or when it considered your appeal.

We have published [guidance on the EPRS](#).

Vocational and technical qualification students

The way to appeal can be different for different qualifications, so that it is appropriate for each one. Please speak to your teacher to find out more information about the specific qualification you have completed. If you are a private candidate, you may want to discuss this directly with the relevant awarding organisation.

T Level students – Technical Qualification

You should talk to your centre if you think there has been a mistake in the marking of either the **core** assessment or **occupational specialism** assessments.

You can ask your centre for a review of the assessments that the centre has marked and you can ask to see your marked assessment. You can also ask your centre to speak to your awarding organisation for a review of the assessments that the awarding organisation has marked. Your centre can ask to see your marked assessment.

The arrangements for reviews, appeals and the exam procedures review service (EPRS) for the Technical Qualification are similar to the appeals arrangements for GCSEs, AS and A levels explained above. For more information, you should speak to your centre.

Contingency arrangements if exams can't go ahead as planned

The government has confirmed it is committed to exams and formal assessments going ahead in summer 2022. As the path of the pandemic is still uncertain, it's important that we've got plans in place in case they can't go ahead.

GCSE, AS, A level, Project and AEA students

In the unlikely event that exams cannot go ahead as planned due to the pandemic, students' grades will instead be determined by their teachers, using Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs). This will be similar to the arrangements in summer 2021.

You may find it useful to look at [Ofqual's guidance for teachers on collecting evidence](#) during the year that would be used to inform teacher assessed grades if exams cannot go ahead. This applies to GCSEs, AS and A levels, the Advanced Extension Award (AEA) and Project qualifications.

We expect that many of you will already have taken some of the assessments that your centre would use for TAGs, if needed. Your centre will decide when it has collected sufficient evidence from you. Preparing for, and taking, those assessments

should also help you to prepare for summer exams.

The guidance for centres on collecting evidence sets out that:

- you should be assessed in exam-like conditions wherever possible
- you must be told before each assessment that your performance in it would be used for a TAG if exams were not able to go ahead – and wherever possible, this information should be given far enough in advance to allow you time to revise and prepare
- you should be told which parts of the subject content will be covered by each assessment, but should not be told the questions in advance or be able to predict the questions from information given to you
- ideally, the total time you spend in assessments should not be more than the total time you would spend taking exams for the relevant qualification
- you should not be given the opportunity to repeat an assessment

Advance information was published on 7 February. Your teachers should now take this into account when deciding how to assess you.

If you are taking a GCSE, AS or A level that includes non-exam assessment, such as a dance or music performance, your teachers would take this into account when deciding your TAG.

The same reasonable adjustments that will be made for disabled students taking exams in the summer should, where possible, be made for assessments taken during the year that could be used to inform TAGs. If it is only identified after an assessment that you need a reasonable adjustment, your teacher should allow you to take a different, but equivalent, assessment with the reasonable adjustment in place. If it is not possible to arrange for you to sit another assessment and exams are subsequently cancelled, your centre should take into account when determining a TAG that your reasonable adjustment was not in place for the assessment.

You should tell your teachers before, or immediately after, the assessment about any illness, injury or other event that you could not prevent that might have affected your performance in an assessment. If a teacher is satisfied your performance in an assessment was affected by an event outside your control at the time of, or immediately before, the assessment, the teacher should adjust their marking of the assessment.

Teachers would not adjust their marking because your learning had been disrupted by the pandemic.

Vocational and technical qualification students

In the unlikely event that exams and assessments cannot take place in the summer, then for some qualifications, particularly those used alongside or instead of GCSEs, AS and A levels, your results may be awarded using Teacher Assessed Grades. This would be similar to the arrangements in summer 2021. The work used to decide your result would be likely to come from assessments or other pieces of work that you have already done during the year.

T Levels

If the government decides it is unsafe for **core** assessments to go ahead this year, then Teacher Assessed Grades would be used. The **occupational specialism** assessments test skills, and so if it is not safe for them to go ahead then they would

need to be delayed.

Further information, including useful contacts

Schools, colleges and other exam centres

Students study for qualifications in a number of settings – including schools, colleges and a range of providers such as adult learning providers and private training providers. Typically these places of study are registered as exam centres and are where you will take your exams and assessments.

Some students may choose to study independently and enter exams as private candidates. Private candidates register to take exams in a school, college or other type of exam centre. Some exam centres only deliver assessments and exams, and do not teach students.

Contact

In the first instance, you should ask your centre any questions about the qualifications you are taking, or about preparing for your exams and assessments. There is usually an **exams officer** in each centre who manages the running of exams.

Ofqual

[Ofqual](#) regulates over 190 awarding organisations to develop, deliver and award qualifications in England. We set rules that awarding organisations must follow. We focus on making sure the qualifications system is fair, so that students, parents, teachers and others can be confident in results.

You can find further information about the arrangements for 2022 on [Ofqual's website](#).

Our [postcard for students and parents](#) shows the changes made to help students in England with GCSE, AS and A level exams. We have published information about these [changes to GCSE, AS and A level exams in more detail](#).

You can also read about the [arrangements in place for vocational and technical qualifications](#).

You may also wish to read our [letters to centres, students and private candidates](#).

Contact

Email enquiries: public.enquiries@ofqual.gov.uk

Public enquiry phone line: 0300 303 3344.

Our phone line is normally open from 09:00 to 17:00 on weekdays – please check our website for opening times on and after results days.

If you wish to complain to Ofqual about an exam board or other awarding organisation, for example, because you think it hasn't followed our rules or its own

published policies and procedure, see our [complaints procedure](#). We would usually expect you to have complained to the exam board before coming to us, to give the exam board an opportunity to resolve your complaint.

Awarding organisations

The awarding organisations that offer GCSEs, AS and A levels are commonly called exam boards. Exam boards develop, mark and award GCSEs, AS and A level qualifications. There are 4 exam boards delivering these qualifications in England: AQA, OCR, Pearson and WJEC Eduqas.

You can find contact information for the exam boards on their websites:

[AQA](#)

[OCR](#)

[Pearson](#)

[WJEC Eduqas](#)

The [contact details of the awarding organisations](#) that deliver the wide range of vocational and technical qualifications that Ofqual regulates can be found online. If you're unsure which awarding organisation's qualification you're studying towards, you should speak to your teacher or exams officer.

You can also find information about regulated awarding organisations and their qualifications on the [Ofqual Register](#).

Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ)

[JCQ](#) is the exam boards' membership organisation. Exam boards use JCQ to set common policies and procedures that centres must follow when running GCSEs, AS and A levels.

JCQ has [published information for centres and students](#) on the 2022 arrangements for GCSE, AS and A levels.

Information and contact: [JCQ website](#)

The Department for Education

The [Department for Education](#) sets:

- the subject content that GCSEs, AS and A levels must cover
- any public health requirements for exams and assessments, for example, whether students should wear masks in assessments and exams
- measures to judge schools' and colleges' performance

General enquiries

[Contact form for general enquiries](#)

Telephone: 0370 000 2288

Opening times: Monday to Friday 9.30am to 5pm, (excluding bank holidays)

You may get a quicker answer by calling between 9.30am and 10am, or between 4pm and 5pm.

Results and next steps: National Careers Service

If you want more information on your next steps after you've received your results, contact the National Careers Service.

[National Careers Service](#).

Telephone: 0800 100 900

Lines are open from 08:00 to 20:00 Monday to Friday and 10:00 to 17:00 on Saturdays. Calls are free from landlines and most mobile numbers

Higher education admissions: UCAS

For any questions about higher education application and admissions, you should contact the relevant institution directly. You can also contact [UCAS](#) for more information.

[UCAS](#)

Telephone: 0371 468 0 468

Lines are open Monday to Friday, 08:30 to 18:00

Mental health support

Always make sure you speak to somebody if you are feeling anxious or struggling with your mental health. This might be a parent, carer or someone else you trust.

You may find it helpful to read our [resources on preparing for exams](#) – including our [guide to coping with exam pressure](#).

You can also contact:

[Childline](#), telephone: 0800 1111

[Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services \(CAMHS\)](#)

[Mind](#)

[Young Minds](#)

[Call NHS 111](#)

Equalities: Equality Advisory and Support Services (EASS)

You can contact the [Equality Advisory and Support Service \(EASS\)](#) for advice on

discrimination concerns. EASS advises and assists individuals on issues relating to equality and human rights, across England, Scotland and Wales.

Telephone: 0808 800 0082

Textphone: 0808 800 0084

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