

GUIDANCE

Examinations and assessments: coronavirus

Information on examinations and assessments, including A levels, during the coronavirus pandemic.

Part of: Further and higher education: coronavirus, Qualifications and Schools: coronavirus

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Examinations

Are summer examinations going ahead?

We have announced that, following advice from Qualifications Wales, the best way forward is not to proceed with summer exam series. Learners due to sit their GCSEs and A levels this summer will be awarded a fair grade to recognise their work. The priority is ensuring fairness for learners while following public health advice.

Grades for GCSE and A level qualifications in 2020 will be calculated using a range of available evidence including for instance, work done to date, mock exams and teacher assessed grades. In determining how we proceed, the focus will be on what is in the best interests of learners both in terms of their current well-being and their progress to work, education or training. We aim that no learner will be disadvantaged.

Qualifications Wales have published a more [detailed set of questions and answers about examinations](#).

We won't be using the grades awarded to publish performance measure outcomes in 2020.

How will you ensure that the decision to cancel summer examinations won't have an adverse impact on students' progression and life chances?

Learners due to sit their GCSEs and A levels this summer will be awarded a fair grade to recognise their work, drawing on the range of information that is available.

Qualifications Wales have published a more [detailed set of questions and answers about examinations](#).

In determining how we proceed, the focus will be on what is in the best interests of learners both in terms of their current well-being and their future work, education or training.

What will happen for learners in year 10?

Year 10 learners who were due to sit exams that would have led to a whole GCSE qualification this summer will be issued a grade following the same process as Year 11 learners. Teacher assessment grades and other evidence will be used to calculate a grade.

Year 10 learners who were due to sit units only, that is units that will lead to GCSE results next summer, will not receive estimated results. For those learners, there will be two options. They can choose to sit the units they plan to take in summer 2021, with their overall GCSE grade calculated on the basis of that performance only.

Alternatively, they can choose to sit the year 10 units in summer 2021, along with Year 11 exams. Whichever option a learner chooses, they will be awarded the best grade from either route – either the grade awarded from performance on the year 11 units alone or the grade awarded from combining both year 10 and year 11 units.

Qualifications Wales have published a more [detailed set of questions and answers about examinations](#).

How will AS levels be affected?

This year all AS learners will receive an estimated AS grade and there will be no AS exams until summer 2021. The estimate will be based on a range of evidence, including teacher assessment grades, and will not contribute to A level results in 2021.

In summer 2021, AS learners will have two options for their A level award. They can either choose to only sit the A2 units, with the A level grade awarded solely on their performance in those units, or they can choose to sit AS and A2 units. If they choose to sit the AS units alongside the A2 units they will be awarded the best grade from either route – either the grade awarded from performance on the A2 units alone or the grade awarded from combining both AS and A2 units.

Qualifications Wales have published a more [detailed set of questions and answers about examinations](#).

When will children get their GCSE and A-level results?

The 2020 Wales results day for AS & A level students, and for GCSE students, will be as originally scheduled. This means that Wales, Northern Ireland and England will share the results days of 13 August for AS & A Level and 20 August for GCSEs.

How will my grade be assessed?

Following the announcement that the summer exams would be cancelled and that grades for GCSE, AS and A-Level and Skills Challenge certificate learners would be based on the range of information available, on 3 April [Qualifications Wales published detailed guidance for exam centres](#), accompanied by FAQs for learners and their parents, about how grades would be calculated.

Qualifications Wales has provided guidance to make sure that teachers in different exam centres (schools and colleges) take a common approach to assessing their students.

How will teachers awarding grades affect external (private) candidates and home educated learners?

The Welsh Government and Qualifications Wales are aware that external candidates – such as those entering privately for re-sits, or learners who are home schooled - are anxious to know how assessment grade arrangements might be applied to them. Where centres have accepted entries from 'private candidates' (learners who might be home-schooled, following distance-learning programmes or studying independently) those learners should be given a grade where the Head of Centre is confident that they and their staff have seen sufficient evidence of the learners' achievement to make an objective judgement.

Qualifications Wales, the independent regulator for Wales, is currently exploring whether there are options for those learners for whom this is not possible and who need results for progression purposes. Updates will be provided as soon as possible.

When will learners have the next opportunity to sit exams?

For learners who choose to sit exams they have missed this year, there will be an opportunity to sit GCSEs in English Language, Mathematics, Mathematics-Numeracy and Welsh Language in November 2020. Other qualifications will be available as part of the summer 2021 series.

Why won't AS level grades in summer 2020 count towards A level grades?

On 27 March, following detailed consideration of the options available the Minister for Education was able to outline the approach for learners who were due to sit their AS levels and Year 10 learners who would have taken GCSE unit assessments this summer. Learners who were due to sit their AS exams this year will not be required to take those exams at a later date. Instead they will be treated in a similar way to those taking GCSEs and A levels and will be awarded a calculated grade based on centre assessment data and statistical modelling. Calculated grades will not however contribute to A level results in 2021.

For those continuing with the subject to the A2 level, you will have two options in summer 2021:

Option 1: You can choose to sit both the AS units and the A2 units for the A level. The full A level grade will be calculated on how you do in all these units in the full A level.

Option 2: You can sit just the A2 units and your performance in these will be used to calculate a result for the AS units. The combined marks will then be used to produce the A level grade.

If you choose to follow option 1, WJEC will still check what your grade would have been with option 2. If option 2 gives a higher grade, then you will get the higher grade.

The process for awarding A-level grades is complex and made up of a number of components. Actual marks are needed from each AS unit, to provide UMS (Unified Mark Scale) marks which can then be combined with the A2 unit UMS marks, to produce the A level grade. This detail won't be available for calculated grades this summer, and so can't be used in production of the A level grade in summer 2021. This is why, unless you opt to take your AS units alongside your A2 units, for the purposes of determining your A-level award summer 2021, the AS unit marks will be derived from your actual performance in your A2 units. This is a tested and well-established statistical methodology, already used where students miss certain units due to illness.

We are working closely with key stakeholders, including the FE and HE sectors to ensure learners are not disadvantaged.

What will happen with exams scheduled for the 2020 to 2021 academic year?

We understand learners and teachers concerns about the impact of the pandemic on their preparations for next year's exams. We are working closely with Qualifications Wales and WJEC, as well as the other UK nations, to consider a range of options to ensure learners are not unfairly disadvantaged. We will communicate the course of action as soon as possible.

Assessments

Will learners have to sit the Numeracy (Reasoning) paper test this year?

No. The requirements for National Tests and online assessments in Wales during the 2019 to 2020 academic year have been relaxed.

Will learners be required to take the online personalised assessments in Numeracy (Procedural) and Reading?

The requirement for learners to take the personalised assessments and for schools to provide reports to parents and carers has been relaxed during the current academic year. The assessment site is still available to access reports and for schools to schedule assessments when they next consider it appropriate to do so.

Where learners have completed procedural numeracy assessments this year, schools will have access to feedback on their skills, age-standardised scores and progress reports.

Feedback reports for the reading assessments are also available. However, scores and progress reports will only be available once the majority of learners have taken the reading assessments. Given current circumstances, this is now subject to a delay and we will provide a further update on this when available.

Will schools still be expected to undertake end of Key Stage 2 and end of Key Stage 3 teacher assessments?

No. We will be removing these requirements for the rest of this academic year. As a result, schools will not be required to report on the outcomes of the teacher assessments either.

Will moderation cluster groups be expected to meet between now and the end of the school year?

No. This statutory requirement will be removed for the rest of this academic year. As we will not require the assessments to take place, schools will not be expected to undertake the moderation process at the end of Key Stage 2 or at the end of Key Stage 3.

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