> Taking exams during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak

Department

Part of

**Education and childcare during coronavirus** 

> Closures, exams and managing a school or early years setting during coronavirus

for Education

Taking exams during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak

Guidance

## Updated 13 July 2020 **Summary of changes** Contents

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### • added the following: • a new section with more detail on centre assessment grades

We have:

year

• a new section on 2021 arrangements • further detail on the autumn series of exams, including timings

Students who were due to sit A level, AS level or GCSE exams this summer will receive a

achieved had exams gone ahead – taking into account a range of evidence including, for

calculated grade. For each student, schools and colleges have provided a 'centre

assessment grade' for each subject – the grade they would be most likely to have

re-ordered existing content and included new subheadings to make navigation easier

• removed outdated information, such as sections on why exams were cancelled this

Search

- Awarding grades in 2020
- A levels, AS levels and GCSEs grading in summer 2020

#### example, non-exam assessment and mock results. To make sure that grades are fair between schools and colleges, exam boards are putting all centre assessment grades through a process of standardisation using a

# information is in the guidance from Ofqual on <u>awarding GCSE</u>, <u>AS and A levels</u>.

model developed with Ofqual, the independent qualifications regulator. Further

Ensuring fairness in the arrangements for awarding GCSEs, AS and A levels for summer 2020

Ofqual has developed a fair and robust process that takes into account a broad range of

evidence, including assessments by schools and colleges of the grades that students would have been likely to obtain if exams went ahead and their prior attainment. Ofqual's overriding aim is to make sure arrangements this summer are as fair as possible for all students. Ofqual ran a consultation from 15 to 29 April seeking views on aspects of their proposed arrangements for awarding GCSEs, AS and A levels, including an equality impact

assessment informed by a review of the research literature on bias in teacher

followed in their case, they will have access to a right of appeal on that basis.

Pupils who do not feel their calculated grade reflects their ability will have the

qualifications this summer. <u>Decisions from this consultation</u> were published on 22 May. Ofqual has also published additional guidance for schools and colleges on objectivity in grading and ranking. If an A level, AS level or GCSE student does not believe the correct process has been

Ofqual has taken feedback to its consultation, and the findings from its literature review

The calculated grade process The centre assessment grades which schools and colleges have submitted to the exam boards for A and AS levels and GCSEs are an assessment of the likely grades that

students would have obtained had exams gone ahead. These will then be standardised

across schools and colleges. For this reason, students' final calculated grades will not

school or college, or the predicted grades used for university applications.

necessarily be the same as either the centre assessment grade put forward by their

Taking past performance of the school or college into account when devising the calculated grade Ofqual's guidance says that one of the sources of evidence schools and colleges should draw on is the performance of this year's students compared to those in previous years. However, this is only one of the sources of evidence that might be taken into account.

Ofqual's public consultation in April included proposals for how the standardisation

process at national level should take the past performance of schools and colleges into

model for one student or for a centre's cohort of students as a result of an appeal would

Schools and colleges taking incomplete coursework into

account. Decisions from this consultation were published on 22 May. Ofqual decided

not to provide for appeals in respect of the operation or outcome of the statistical

standardisation model, as varying the application of the statistical standardisation

be unfair to other students at other centres and would undermine standards.

#### Ofqual's guidance on awarding GCSE, AS and A levels made clear that schools and colleges did not need to ask students to complete any unfinished non-exam assessment work for the purposes of grading. Where they chose to take into account coursework completed after 20 March, Ofqual advised headteachers and principals to

sit exams in the autumn, and to prepare for those exams if necessary. Results days for other qualifications are set by individual awarding organisations. Results for vocational and technical qualifications used for progression to further or higher education will be available on the same days as A level and GCSE results. Students who are taking such qualifications should check the planned results day with their school or college.

A and AS level results will be published on 13 August and GCSE results on 20 August, as

originally planned. This will enable progression to higher and further education to take

place in the normal way. It will also allow students time to decide whether they wish to

#### as grades awarded in any other year. They will therefore be accepted by all institutions. University representatives have already confirmed that they expect universities to do all they can to support students and ensure they can progress to higher education.

An unconditional offer means the student has already met the entry requirements, so the place is theirs if they wish to accept it.

Students participating in the autumn series of exams

Students who do not feel their calculated grade reflects their ability will have the

Our aim is for A level results to be awarded before Christmas. Universities

opportunity to sit an exam in the autumn term. AS and A level exams will take place in

representatives have assured us that universities will be as flexible as possible in their

Universities should not begin making new unconditional offers and applicants should

feel no pressure to accept such offers, as they will be awarded a formal calculated

# External candidates in 2020

#### Ofqual and the exam boards have explored the options for those students who do not have an existing relationship with an exam centre and who need results this summer for progression purposes. The Joint Council for Qualifications published guidance for exam centres on accepting private candidates which set out the options that would be available. Unfortunately, not all external candidates will be able to be awarded a

sufficient evidence to enable their exam centre to include them in their centre

their grades, either in the autumn or in summer 2021.

fit all, given the diversity of the VTQ landscape.

these students to allow them to progress wherever possible.

calculated grade this summer because some will not have been in a position to provide

assessment grades and rankings. Students in this position will need to sit exams to get

Ofqual has asked organisations that represent higher and further education providers

to consider the steps that providers could take when making admissions decisions this

they believe that institutions will consider a range of other evidence and information for

summer for any external candidates who do not receive a grade. They have said that

Vocational and technical qualifications (VTQs) in 2020

VTQ students can appeal if they believe that the assessment process was not followed correctly. Students who do not feel their result reflects their ability will be able to sit an assessment at the next available opportunity. Ofqual is working with awarding organisations to agree arrangements for autumn assessment opportunities for VTQs where appropriate. Appeals in 2020

## and AS level exams in 2020 Ofqual launched a consultation on 22 May on the details of the autumn series of exams and announced its <u>decisions</u> on 30 June. In this, Ofqual confirmed that exam boards must make exams available in all GCSE, AS

Student progression in 2020

students who have missed out on some of their education

colleges and universities to ensure that we do everything we can to best help students

Arrangements for exams and assessments

We expect exams and assessments to go ahead next year. We are working closely with

On 2 July, Ofqual published consultation proposals on arrangements for GCSEs, A and

AS levels in 2021, with the aim of announcing its decisions by early August. Ofqual is

also working with the sector to agree approaches for vocational and technical

Timing of summer 2021 exams

Ofqual, awarding organisations and groups representing teachers, schools, colleges

and students to develop our approach to exams and other assessments next year.

This section relates to summer 2021 examinations

These are extraordinary circumstances. We are working with schools, sixth forms,

prepare for and progress to the next stage of their education.

Support by colleges, sixth forms and universities for

qualifications. On 2 July it also published its factors and principles shaping the operation and regulation of vocational and technical qualifications' assessments for 2020 to 2021, and will set out, in the coming weeks, the measures it expects awarding organisations to take.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) The UK has left the EU Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance and support Get ready for new rules in January 2021

# and equalities impact assessment, into account in finalising the arrangements for these

opportunity to sit an exam in the autumn term.

assessments.

account

**Results days** 

acceptance

Fairness of using mock exam results for awarding grades Mock exam results are one of the sources of evidence that are being taken into account in this process, alongside others. Ofqual published guidance on awarding GCSE, AS and A levels which explained to schools and colleges how to do this fairly and robustly, drawing on a range of evidence to reach a holistic judgement.

## exercise caution where that evidence suggested a change in performance. In many cases, this likely reflected the circumstances and context in which the work was done.

Results and university entry in 2020

Universities, colleges and sixth forms and grade

The calculated grades awarded this summer will be formal grades, with the same status

# Students with a prior unconditional offer

Universities and unconditional offers

grade for each exam they would have taken.

October and GCSE exams in November.

external candidates

admissions.

Any student wanting to understand the implications for university admission of taking these autumn exams should speak to the university from which they have an offer after receiving their calculated grades in the summer.

Where schools and colleges had accepted entries from external candidates (students who they have not taught themselves because they have been home-educated, following distance-learning programmes or studying independently), those students should have been taken account of in the process of producing centre assessment

grades, where the headteacher or principal was confident that they and their staff had

seen sufficient evidence of the student's achievement to make an objective judgement.

Arrangements for home-educated students and other

Arrangements for vocational and technical qualifications Our priority is to ensure that students and adult learners taking vocational or technical qualifications (VTQs) can move on as planned, including starting university, college or sixth form courses, apprenticeships, or progressing in work.

We know one approach to assessment of vocational and technical qualifications will not

awarding results this summer on 22 May. The measures set out that qualifications used

for progression to further or higher education, such as applied general qualifications

and technical awards should, wherever possible, be issued with a calculated result, in

Ofqual published the <u>response to its consultation</u> on VTQs and its framework for

line with the approach proposed for GCSEs, AS and A levels. For other vocational

demonstration of practical competence is necessary, it will not be appropriate to

calculate a result. For these, adapted assessments will be delivered and Ofqual is

Delayed assessments should be delivered as soon as is possible in 2020 to 2021.

working with the awarding organisations and providers to deliver these assessments

wherever possible this summer. Only as a last resort should assessment be delayed.

qualifications, such as those that are used for entry into employment where

#### access to a right of appeal on that basis. Ofqual has consulted on the arrangements for these appeals and announced its decisions on 22 May. Schools and colleges can only appeal, on students' behalf, against the process or the use of data, not against teachers' use of their professional judgement. In addition, if a student does not feel their grade reflects their ability, they will have the

Arrangements for autumn series of GCSE, A

and A level subjects. It also confirmed that exam boards must base results on students'

performance in exams alone and not on any non-exam assessment, with the exception

The Department for Education has also published guidance on centre responsibility for

autumn GCSE, AS and A level exam series, which makes clear that we expect the exam

centre that had entered the students for exams in the summer to enter them in the

AS and A level exams will take place in October and GCSE exams in November.

Ofqual and the exam boards are working to ensure that candidates are awarded a fair

does not believe the correct process has been followed in their case, they will have

grade that recognises the work they have put in. If an A level, AS level or GCSE student

**Arrangements for summer 2020 appeals** 

opportunity to take an exam in the autumn.

of art and design qualifications.

in 2021

autumn if they wish to sit exams, even if the student is no longer enrolled at that centre. Students will also have the option to take their exams in summer 2021, in line with usual practice.

Ofqual's consultation on arrangements for exams and assessments next summer is

approaches for vocational and technical qualifications timetables.

seeking views on a short delay to the GCSE, A and AS level exam timetable in 2021 with

the aim of creating more teaching time. Ofqual is also working with the sector to agree

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