

Part of Education and childcare during coronavirus



# Guidance School and college responsibility for autumn exams

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- Contents
1. Key points
  2. Background
  3. Who is responsible for entering students for autumn exams?
  4. Students who are required to continue to study maths and/or English
  5. The DfE Exam Support Service
  6. Support with paying fees
  7. Site support
  8. Invigilator support

## 1. Key points

In most cases, students will use the grades they receive in the summer to move onto their next step. The grades awarded this summer will be formal grades, with the same status as grades awarded in any other year.

There will also be an opportunity for students to sit exams in the autumn.

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

There is an exception for students who are required to continue to study maths and/or English (that is where they have not yet achieved a grade 4 or above in maths or English language GCSE). In these cases, the school or college where the student is on roll from September will continue to be responsible for entering them.

The Department for Education (DfE) [Exam Support Service](#) will launch at the beginning of the autumn term and will help schools and colleges to book sites and invigilators where required. Schools and colleges will also be able to claim funding through the service if their autumn fees exceed any fee savings that awarding organisations are returning to them, following cancellation of summer exams.

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 tertiary colleges
- independent training providers
- independent schools
- private exam centres

'Autumn exams' refers to the additional GCSE, AS and A level and Vocational and Technical Qualifications (VTQs) which are being held following the cancellation of exams and assessments in the summer. It includes the additional VTQs which will be held in the 2021 spring term.

## 2. Background

Following the cancellation of summer exams, students will receive centre assessment grades wherever possible, except where calculated grades are higher, where the calculated grades will be awarded instead.

These summer grades will be formal grades, with the same status as grades awarded in any other year and we expect the vast majority of students to be able to use them to move on to their next steps.

DfE has [announced](#) that there will be an opportunity for students to sit exams in the autumn 2020 and - for some Vocational and Technical Qualifications (VTQs) - spring 2021 terms. These exams will 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, and it is particularly important that these students are able to sit exams in autumn 2020.

This guidance sets out schools' and colleges' responsibility for entering students to the autumn exams, how the cost of fees will be covered, and the support that DfE is providing for sites and invigilators (through the DfE [Exam Support Service](#)).

This guidance relates to all schools and colleges that are approved to deliver exams and assessments, whether or not they are state funded. It should be read alongside [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.

## 3. Who is responsible for entering students for autumn exams?

We expect the school or college that entered students for the summer series to enter them for autumn exams ([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 know that students and their school or college will want to discuss the best next steps when results are released. In most cases, students will be able to use their summer grades to progress and their school or college will provide them with advice on this.

We expect schools or colleges to extend these arrangements to students who were private candidates in the summer (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 grade, so autumn exams will be essential for many of them.

We appreciate that there will be cases where students, and schools or colleges, 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 school or college 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 school or college to be responsible for contacting the new institution and ensuring that students taking autumn exams are content and are not charged exam fees.

## 4. Students who are required to continue to study maths and/or English

For students who are required to continue to study maths and/or English (as part of 'the condition of funding'), the school or college where the student is on roll from September will continue to be responsible for entering them for the qualifications, as they usually are.

Information for institutions on maths and English condition of funding can be found at [16 to 19 funding: maths and English condition of funding](#). Arrangements for these students will remain unchanged.

## 5. The DfE Exam Support Service

DfE will provide support for schools and colleges to run autumn exams.

The DfE Exam Support Service covers fees charged by awarding organisations, sites and invigilation. The assistance that will be provided on each of these areas is set out below (at sections 6, 7 and 8).

The service will launch at the beginning of the autumn term, alongside guidance on how to use it.

The support will be open to all types of schools and colleges running the additional autumn exams. These comprise:

- state-funded schools
- further education, sixth form and tertiary colleges
- independent training providers
- independent schools
- private exam centres

The service will provide support for A and AS levels and GCSEs (with the exception below), VTQs and other general qualifications at level 1 / 2, level 2 and level 3, where students were entered for summer grades. Other VTQs, including Functional Skills, are not in scope.

The service will not cover English language and maths GCSE exams taken by students who did not achieve a grade 4 or higher in these subjects, because these exams take place in November in a normal year and schools and colleges will have planned and budgeted for them.

## 6. Support with paying fees

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

However, the government is clear that given the unique circumstances in which the autumn exams are being run, students themselves and their families should not have to meet the cost of fees if they want to enter. Schools and colleges should not face additional costs for fees, over and above what they would have paid had summer exams gone ahead.

We expect them to pay fees for students whom they are entering for autumn exams, whether or not those students are on their roll. The DfE Exam Support Service will provide funding if needed to ensure that schools and colleges do not incur a net loss, taking their autumn fees and any rebates/credit notes they receive in respect of summer exams together.

The awarding organisations are providing information to schools and colleges on any rebates they can expect in relation to summer exams. While awarding organisations will have incurred some savings from the summer, they will also have incurred costs, including providing students with summer grades, and preparatory work for the summer series, that had already been completed before exams were cancelled. It is for the individual awarding organisations to decide on rebate arrangements, reflecting their particular circumstances.

We anticipate that the rebates schools and colleges receive will cover the costs of the autumn exams in many cases and we expect them to use these rebates to cover autumn fees. If a school or college's additional fees for the autumn series exceed any summer rebate they receive, DfE will provide funding to cover this deficit. In order to ensure that no student is disadvantaged by needing to sit autumn exams, these arrangements will cover all schools and colleges, not just those in the state-funded sector.

DfE will not be providing 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 the summer. Where private candidates have already paid an administrative fee for the summer, we would not expect them to be charged twice.

Schools and colleges will be able to make claims for any deficit between the cost of their autumn fees and summer fee rebates later in the autumn term. They will need to submit evidence of their autumn fees and of summer fee rebates/credit notes received.

## 7. Site support

Schools and colleges will be able to use the government's specialist venue supplier if they require sites to run autumn exams because it is not possible to do so on their own sites without disruption to study. The supplier will be available for bookings from the beginning of the autumn term. Schools and colleges will book sites using an online form and will agree arrangements with the supplier. These sites will be fully funded. The school or college will be responsible for overseeing the exams and assessments at the sites it books, including following the Joint Council for Qualifications' guidance on alternative sites or appropriate guidance for VTQs set by the relevant awarding organisation.

Alternatively, schools and colleges can book their own sites and submit claims to DfE along with supporting evidence. The claims process will open later in the autumn term. Schools and colleges will be expected to seek value for money in booking sites, for example by sourcing 3 quotes for venues. We expect site costs to reflect typical local rates for the area, unless exceptional circumstances are demonstrated.

The service will not provide funding in relation to schools and colleges using their own premises to facilitate exams.

## 8. Invigilator support

Schools and colleges will be offered the opportunity to book Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checked invigilators through an approved supplier, when the service launches at the beginning of the autumn term.

Most schools and colleges will have made savings on invigilation costs, following the cancellation of summer exams. They will be able to claim back the deficit if their autumn invigilator costs exceed invigilator savings they have made in the summer. They should not make changes to the arrangements they have already made for summer invigilator payments as a result of this guidance. Schools and colleges should keep records of exams administered and may be asked to provide an explanation if they are claiming for high invigilator to student ratios. The claims process will open later in the autumn term.

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