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Examination and assessment guidance: 2020 to 2021

GUIDANCE

# Examination and assessment guidance: 2020 to 2021

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

Part of: [Further education: coronavirus](#), [Qualifications and Schools: coronavirus](#)

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## Contents

- [What is happening with qualifications in 2021?](#)
- [What about Private Candidates?](#)
- [What about learners in Year 10?](#)
- [What about learners in Year 12?](#)
- [What about Non-Examination Assessment?](#)
- [What support will be available for learners in years 11, 12 and 13?](#)
- [When will Year 11 and 13 learners be able to leave school?](#)
- [Does the Minister's decision to cancel exams in Wales apply to English Exam board qualifications?](#)
- [Will the cancellation of exams affect my entry into University?](#)
- [Will learners have to sit the Numeracy \(Reasoning\) paper test this year?](#)
- [Will learners be required to take the online personalised assessments in Numeracy \(Procedural\) and Reading?](#)

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## What is happening with qualifications in 2021?

Before Christmas the Minister announced that general qualifications in 2021 would be based on a three pillar model of non-examination assessment, internal assessment and external assessment. This decision was informed by advice provided by a [Design and Delivery Advisory Group](#) of headteachers and college principals nominated by regional consortia, Colegau Cymru and local authorities.

Since this announcement was made the public health crisis has worsened. Unless the rates of community transmission reduce significantly by 29 January, schools and colleges will continue remote learning for most students until the February half term. As a result we have had to revisit our proposals for qualifications, to reflect the impact of this on learner wellbeing and confidence.

The Design and Delivery Advisory Group (DDAG) have since reconvened and have developed revised proposals in this new context. This includes considering the recommendations of the final report of the independent review of qualifications led by Louise Casella, and which will be published on Friday 22 January.

The Minister has agreed the revised proposals and accepted them as her policy, they are summarised below.

Learners undertaking GCSE, AS and A levels approved by Qualifications Wales will have their qualifications awarded through a Centre Determined Grade model.

This means that grades will be determined by their school or college based on an assessment of the learner's work.

Schools and colleges will be able to use a range of evidence to determine the grades to be awarded to their learners, including NEA elements, mock-exams, and classwork. In addition, the WJEC will offer a set of adapted past papers which can enable schools to continue to assess learning within their teaching plans, providing extra support for teachers and learners. But there will be no formal external assessments.

Qualifications Wales will work with WJEC, supported by the DDAG, to provide an assessment framework to support schools and colleges in developing their assessment plans, which should demonstrate sufficient coverage of key concepts to allow learners to progress, and detail for how the centre has determined a learner's grade. These assessment plans will be quality assured by WJEC.

Once quality assurance has been completed at the centre, the grade will be submitted to WJEC. There will be no algorithm. Learners will appeal to their school or college if they are unhappy with their grade, and to WJEC if they are unhappy with the process.

This Centre Determined Grade approach puts trust in teachers' and lecturers' commitment to prioritise teaching and learning in the time available, and their knowledge of the quality of their learners' work.

We have sought to make the grading approach as clear as possible in the circumstances, while remaining as simple and responsive as possible. Teaching the core content and aspects of each course remains my absolute priority for learners in exam years, so they are supported to progress with certainty into their next steps, and with confidence in the grades they've been awarded.

Further information on the centre-determined grade model and what it means for teachers and learners is available on the [Qualifications Wales](#) and [WJEC](#) websites.

## What about Private Candidates?

We recognise that due to the arrangements that were put in place last year to calculate grades not all private candidates, including mature students who were re-taking qualifications and learners who are home-educated, were able to receive grades as schools and colleges might not have had enough knowledge of a candidate to make a professional judgement on their ability.

We understand that some private candidates might be anxious about the centre-determined grade model and whether they will be able to receive grades. However, the Minister has asked the Design and Delivery Advisory Group to consider arrangements for private candidates as a priority and has made a commitment to ensure that there is a clear option for them to support their progression too. We will make further information available on this as soon as possible.

Our priority is to support learners in developing the skills and knowledge they need to confidently progress – this includes the needs of private candidates.

## What about learners in Year 10?

Where learners in Year 10 are due to complete a qualification this year then the centre-determined grade approach will apply, but it won't apply to learners due to take individual units of assessment. Qualifications Wales will consider what assessment adaptations might be necessary for these subjects next year.

## What about learners in Year 12?

Learners in Year 12 will be awarded an AS grade that is Centre Determined. This will recognise the hard work and learning that they have undertaken this year, provide for progression into the A-level course of study, and support UCAS applications, but will not contribute to the final A level award in 2022.

## What about Non-Examination Assessment?

Recognising the challenges posed by the ongoing disruption and remote learning, the deadlines and controls around non-examination assessment (NEA) are being removed and it will not be moderated by the WJEC.

However where possible we would continue to encourage schools and colleges to support learners to undertake some or all of their NEA to continue to build learning and skills.

Building knowledge and skills, and covering core concepts to support progression, remains a priority and should continue to be a focus, supported by our [guidance](#) and approach to distance learning as appropriate.

## What support will be available for learners in years 11, 12 and 13?

The Welsh Government is investing an additional £1.9m in education resources to support learners in years 11, 12 and 13 in preparing for their GCSE and A Level assessments. The revision tools, available on the Hwb and the WJEC website, include 'knowledge organisers' to help with learning key facts and information, walk-throughs and revision guides. The resources are in addition to £7m being provided for schools and colleges to deliver mentoring and revision support programmes for learners taking qualifications.

Teaching the core content and aspects of each course remains our absolute priority for learners in exam years, so they are supported to progress with certainty into their next steps, and with confidence in the grades they've been awarded and the centre-determined grade model is designed to support this so that learners can continue with their learning through to the summer term.

We are working with higher education institutions to look at how they can support learners in Wales through this transition, and can provide a bridge into university courses. Initial engagement and commitment from our universities have been very positive.

Equally, we will explore with further education institutions and schools how they can support those learners currently in years 10, 11 and 12, as they move to the new academic year. It is vital that the wider education sector continues to come together to support our learners.

## When will Year 11 and 13 learners be able to leave school?

We recognise that learners and educational professionals have experienced a significant level of disruption during the last two academic years. In recognition of the need for stability, there will be no changes to term dates nor to the school leaving age this academic year. We all wish to ensure that learners are prepared and confident to move to their next steps. During the remainder of the summer term, schools and colleges have the flexibility to focus on further supporting student transition from Years 11, 12, and 13, including through the recently announced £8.5m funding allocation for schools and colleges. We recognise the stress and uncertainty the pandemic has caused for many of our learners, and acknowledge that learners will benefit from having time off during summer in order to be well rested in advance of the next academic year in September 2021.

## Does the Minister's decision to cancel exams in Wales apply to English Exam board qualifications?

No, the new summer 2021 arrangements only apply to Qualifications Wales approved qualifications designed for Wales and delivered by the WJEC and not to qualifications delivered by English-based awarding bodies, as these bodies are regulated by Ofqual.

## Will the cancellation of exams affect my entry into University?

We have engaged with universities who have highlighted that their priority is students who have covered core aspects of their course, and that a transparent approach which provides evidence of a learner's knowledge and ability will not disadvantage learners in their next steps.

The [Design and Delivery Advisory Group](#) have looked to develop proposals which meet these needs.

The approach that we are proposing is intended to maximise the time available for teaching and learning so that learners have the opportunity to develop the skills and knowledge they need to confidently progress.

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

There will be no statutory paper-based tests in Wales this year. The online personalised assessments in Numeracy (Reasoning) are being trialed and will become a statutory requirement from the 2021 to 2022 academic year.

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

Personalised assessments in Numeracy (Procedural) and Reading provide learners with a flexible means of gaining information on their learners' skills. They have been designed to support progression and engage learners in understanding where they are in their learning journey. For the 2020 to 2021 school year, the requirement for schools to run the assessments is on a 'reasonable endeavours' basis.

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 after the majority of learners have taken the reading assessments.

It should be noted that the purpose of these assessments is to support learners to make progress; personalised assessments are not part of the qualifications process.

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