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Guidance

**Guidance for schools, colleges and other exam centres on contingency arrangements for students entering GCSEs, AS and A levels, the Advanced Extension Award and**

# Project qualifications in summer 2022

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## Introduction

### Arrangements for exams and non-exam assessments for students taking qualifications in summer 2022

The government is clear that students entering GCSEs, AS or A levels in 2022 should expect to take exams in the summer and complete any non-exam assessments in the usual way throughout the year.

In recognition of the fact that students' education has been disrupted by the pandemic, they [will be given extra help to prepare for their exams as follows](#), as confirmed following a joint DfE and Ofqual consultation:

- students taking GCSEs in English literature, history, ancient history and geography will not need to cover the usual range of content in the exams – the exam boards have published information on their websites on how this will work for each of their specifications in these subjects. Students taking GCSEs in all other subjects will be given advance information about the focus of the content of the exams to support their revision
- students taking AS and A levels will be given advance information about the focus of the content of the exams to support their revision
- students taking GCSE mathematics will be given in their exams copies of formulae they would in other years have to memorise
- students taking GCSE physics and combined science will be given in their exams a sheet covering all the equations they might need to apply in the exams

The advance information for GCSE and AS and A levels will be published no later than 7 February 2022. The government will decide whether the advance information should be published earlier. The government will take account of the level of disruption to students' education being caused by the pandemic if it decides that advance information should be published before 7 February 2022. It will give at least a week's notice if it decides exam boards should publish the information before that date.

Some [changes have also been made to the way non-exam assessments that are used in some GCSE, AS and A level subjects are taken](#), to address difficulties that might otherwise be caused by the pandemic.

Ofqual has decided that for the exams due to be taken in summer 2022, grade boundaries will be set so that more students than was the case before the pandemic receive higher grades, providing a safety net for students in this transitional year.

We expect students taking Project qualifications in summer 2022 to be assessed in the normal way. No changes have been made to the way the Advanced Extension Award will be examined.

## Contingency plans

Although the government is firmly committed to exams going ahead in summer 2022, we need to have contingency plans in place for the unlikely event that exams have to be cancelled again because of the pandemic. This guidance sets out what teachers should do during the remainder of the academic year 2021 to 2022, until exams are taken, as a contingency. It follows the [outcome of a consultation on contingency arrangements](#).

If exams had to be cancelled in summer 2022, students' grades would instead be determined by their teachers, using a Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs) approach similar to that used in summer 2021. TAGs are based on teachers' assessment of their students' work.

This guidance is intended to support schools, colleges and other exam centres (all referred to as "centres" in this guidance) to take a proportionate approach to gathering evidence that would be used to inform TAGs if necessary. Where possible, centres' existing assessment plans should be used.

We are publishing this guidance now so that teachers know how to collect evidence from their students in advance of any decision to cancel exams. Teachers must not attempt to determine TAGs unless exams are cancelled and only in this event will further guidance be published.

At that point, we would take account of the timing of the decision, the reason for the decision and any public health restrictions in place at the time, as well as lessons learned from the 2021 arrangements, and would provide further guidance to centres. In the meantime, teachers should assess their students in line with the guidance below, to gather the evidence they would use to determine TAGs should they be needed. For many centres, the necessary assessments will likely already be planned to take place to support students' learning and help them prepare for summer exams.

[We have published an open letter to students.](#)

# Guidance on collecting evidence to be used to determine TAGs if they are needed in summer 2022

## Non-exam assessments for GCSEs, AS and A levels

Where a GCSE, AS or A level includes non-exam assessment (NEA), such as a dance or music performance, teachers should support their students, wherever possible, to complete that assessment in line with [arrangements announced by Ofqual for 2022](#) and the timescales set by exam boards. If exams go ahead as we expect, the NEA will be marked and moderated as usual and combined with students' exam marks to generate their grades. If exams are cancelled, teachers will be expected to take a student's NEA into account when determining a TAG.

For art and design qualifications, for which there are no exams, students should complete their non-exam assessments in line with the [2022 requirements as published](#).

## The conditions under which students should be assessed

With the exception of art and design qualifications, teachers should assess their students to provide them with opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding across the range of content they have been taught and in ways that cover the assessment objectives for the qualification.

Students taking GCSEs, AS and A levels and the Advanced Extension Award should be assessed under exam-like conditions wherever possible. For example, students:

- should not know the questions in the assessment beforehand
- should work independently and without assistance (other than as required for a reasonable adjustment)
- should not have access to books or revision notes and the assessment should be timed and supervised

This will both help to ensure that the work is authentic and prepare students for exams in the summer. These controls may be provided within a classroom rather than exam hall setting.

During their assessments, students taking GCSEs in maths, combined science and physics should have access to the formulae and equation sheets that they will

have in the summer exams, where assessments are taking place after these sheets are published. Students taking art and design qualifications should complete their non-exam assessments – no additional assessments are needed.

Wherever possible, a centre must either assess all of its students who are taking a particular qualification using the same material at the same time or using different materials at different times. There is otherwise a risk that students who are assessed at a later time will know the questions they will be asked, which would be unfair. If it is not possible to assess the whole cohort at the same time, the assessment approach for any particular qualification should be consistent within a centre, for example, students must be assessed at broadly the same time, over the same range of content and using the same style of assessment (but not the same questions).

Exceptions might be needed, for example if a centre is assessing a private candidate who has not covered the same content as the centre's students, if a student joins a centre later in the year, or if an individual student has been taught significantly less than the cohort because of illness.

Reasonable adjustments should be made for disabled students, as set out below.

## **When students should be assessed**

Some subjects are assessed by a combination of exam and non-exam assessments. Teachers should consider the balance of exam and non-exam assessments when deciding on the number of occasions on which students should be assessed.

In addition to completing any NEA, centres should plan assessment opportunities to a timetable that secures evidence which could be used to inform TAGs if necessary, including in the autumn term. Approaches may vary based on what assessments are already planned (or have already taken place) for students, but for a qualification that has no NEA, a sensible approach may be to plan to assess students in each of the:

- second half of the autumn term 2021
- spring term of 2022
- first half of the summer term 2022

For many centres, the required assessments will likely already be planned to take place to support students' learning, and some assessments may already have taken place. These normal assessment points should, where possible, be used to provide evidence to inform TAGs if they are needed.

The early assessment(s) will mean that if the pandemic disrupts education later in the academic year, such that it is not possible for teachers to assess their students further, there will be some evidence on which TAGs can be based if

exams are cancelled. If it is possible to continue to assess students later in the academic year, there will be more, and more recent, evidence available to inform TAGs should they become necessary.

Some centres such as pupil referral units, hospital schools or special schools might, for good reason, adopt a different approach to assessing their students, for example because of the characteristics of their students, or the nature of their provision. In such cases, centres should be able to provide a rationale for their approach to the exam boards if exams are cancelled.

Where assessments have already taken place under different conditions in this academic year, centres should exercise their judgement over whether it would be appropriate, and in the interests of their students, for evidence gathered from those assessments to contribute towards TAGs if needed. They should be prepared to explain the approach in their centre policies for TAGs if necessary. Centres will not be required to draw up centre policies unless exams are cancelled.

## **The time spent assessing students**

The total assessment time should not normally exceed the total time students would spend taking exams for the relevant qualification, plus any time spent on non-exam assessment. Teachers should guard against over-assessment and think about opportunities to schedule specific assessment opportunities which, taken together, would provide evidence from broadly the same proportion of the specification as would normally be covered in exams.

## **The content on which students should be assessed**

Teachers should plan so that across the assessments, students are assessed on a wide range of content, similar to that which they will expect in their summer exams, and across the assessment objectives for the qualification. In deciding how to phase assessments, teachers should bear in mind that if TAGs become necessary, they will be based only on content that students have been taught. If a student was absent when a topic was taught and that topic is covered by an assessment, centres do not need to vary the assessment to accommodate that student.

## **The assessment materials**

The assessments should be as useful as possible for students preparing to take summer exams. Assessments should, therefore, be similar to full or parts of the

exam papers they are preparing to take next summer. Past papers could be used, in full or part, where appropriate. If teachers develop their own assessments, the questions used should be in a similar style to those found in the corresponding exam board's exam papers. In their totality they should cover a similar breadth of content and marked in line with the exam board's approach to marking exam questions for the qualification.

## **Student awareness**

Where assessments are scheduled after the publication of this guidance, students must be told before they take each assessment that their performance in it would be used as part of the evidence to determine a TAG if exams are cancelled. Wherever possible, this information should be given sufficiently far in advance of the assessment to allow students time to revise and prepare.

Students should be told which parts of the subject content will be covered by the assessment, but they should not be told the questions in advance or be able to predict the questions from information given to them. This means that students should not, for example, be assessed using past papers from one particular year spread over three assessment points, as students would be able to predict the questions they would be answering in the later assessments. Teachers setting assessments after the advance information for the summer 2022 exams has been published, should take that advance information into account when deciding how to assess their students. They should make their students aware of the fact that they have done so prior to their assessments.

In exceptional circumstances, it might be necessary for assessments that were not undertaken in line with this guidance to be used to inform a TAG, for example where a student misses the later assessments because of illness. In such cases the student might not have been told in advance of taking the assessment that their performance might be used to inform a TAG. Guidance will be provided on this if exams are cancelled.

## **Students should not re-sit assessments**

Students should not be given the opportunity to repeat an assessment, for example to improve their mark in response to feedback. Their performance in later assessments might, of course, reflect feedback on their performance in earlier assessments.

## **Reasonable adjustments for disabled students**

The same reasonable adjustments that will be made for disabled students taking exams in the summer should, where possible, be applied to the assessments. Records should be made of the adjustments and the reasons for them. The centre should record the reason why any reasonable adjustment was not made.

If a student's need for a reasonable adjustment is only identified after an assessment has taken place, their teacher should record the reason for this late identification and allow the student to undertake a different, but equivalent, assessment with the reasonable adjustment in place.

## **Special consideration for students whose performance is affected by an event outside of their control**

If a teacher is satisfied that a student's performance in one or more of the assessments was affected by an event that was outside of the student's control at the time of, or immediately before, the assessment, such as illness or family bereavement, the teacher should adjust their marking of the assessment. The [Joint Council for Qualification's \(JCQ\) approach to special consideration](#) provides a helpful reference point for teachers who need to adjust a mark to take such an event into account. The centre should keep a record of the event and the marking adjustment, in a form that would be available for an exam board to review if exams are cancelled. Centres should make sure students know they need to tell their teachers before, or immediately after, the assessment of any events outside of their control that might have affected their performance in an assessment.

## **Disruption to the assessments**

Where significant disruption to education means assessments cannot be completed for all or some of their students in line with this guidance, centres should take reasonable steps to collect evidence of each student's knowledge and understanding in ways that align as far as possible with this guidance. Centres will need to be assured that the evidence collected is of the student's work alone – that it is authentic – and that it covers a broad range of the subject content and the assessment objectives for the qualification. Centres should record the exceptional reasons why they have not been able to gather evidence in line with this guidance for all or some of their students. The records will need to be available for exam boards to check if exams are cancelled. Centres are not expected to deviate from the guidance to accommodate minor disruptions to a student's education.



## **Marking**

Teachers should mark the assessments in line with published exam board mark schemes and guidance where appropriate. Centres should support teachers to mark work for the same qualification to the same standard. Students should be provided with feedback, which could include marks or comments. Teachers may tell the student the grade at which their performance in the assessment indicates they have performed. They should also be clear that the marking and grading have not been quality assured. Teachers must make it clear to their students that any grade used to indicate the level at which the student has performed is not a TAG. It will not be possible for a teacher to determine a TAG unless and until we set specific guidance on the determination of TAGs for 2022, which we will only do if exams are cancelled.

## **Retention of the work**

The original student work must be retained by the centre. Students may be given copies if this would help support their learning.

## **Project qualifications**

Students taking Project qualifications do not take exams. Project qualifications use non-exam assessment only. Teachers do not, therefore, need to carry out any additional assessment of their Project students to collect evidence in case exams are cancelled. They should encourage and support students to complete their Project assessments as usual.

## **Private candidates**

Private candidates are typically home educated or students who are re-taking a qualification having left the school or college with which they originally studied. They may be studying with a distance learning provider, tutor, parent, or without any such support.

In normal years, when exams take place, private candidates register with a centre which arranges for the candidate to take their exams alongside the centre's students. As we expect exams to take place in 2022, centres are encouraged to allow private candidates to register with them in the usual way.

Some private candidates might want centres to assess them throughout the year, alongside the centre's students, in line with this guidance. Centres may agree to do so, although they would need to make sure the assessments only covered

content the private candidate had studied. Alternatively, private candidates could be assessed only if exams are cancelled, in which case they would be assessed in a compressed period.

If exams are cancelled, the Department for Education would again explore ways to encourage centres to work with private candidates and to provide affordable opportunities for private candidates to work with centres.

[We have published an open letter to private candidates.](#)

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