

Summary of Ofqual information

Summer 2020 awarding

Update – 20 April 2020

Representing the exams officer community

Since the announcement by the Secretary of State on 18 March that exams would not be held this summer, *The Exams Office* has been working closely with Ofqual and other key stakeholders to confirm the awarding process for summer 2020.

Along with organisations representing teachers, school/college leaders and educational establishments within the public and private sectors, *The Exams Office* has ensured that the exams officer community has been represented in discussion relating to this summer's awarding process.

With members across almost 4,000 centres in a variety of settings in the UK and overseas, with a range of views and opinions, *The Exams Office* is aware of the need to adopt an approach that represents all its members. Therefore, we apply the following principles to our decision-making process:

- Align with current processes/deadlines, wherever possible, in order to minimise disruption, maladministration/malpractice and the impact of unnecessary workload
- Consider the role of, and impact on, exams officers
- Ensure that candidates are not disadvantaged
- Ensure that centres are supported in the management, administration and conducting of examinations/assessments
- Support the work of Ofqual, the JCQ and their awarding bodies

To implement a standalone and unique awarding process at such short notice across over 6,000 centres and more than one million students in the UK and overseas is a huge undertaking. To ensure that the system caters for the needs of a variety of students in a wide range of academic subjects and qualifications adds further to the complexity of the task. *The Exams Office* would, therefore, like to thank Ofqual for its management of this exceptionally difficult situation to this point, and for understanding the impact of any decisions for the exams officer community.

What has been confirmed to date?

As of 20 April, the following aspects of this summer's awarding process have been confirmed for GCSE, AS and A levels, Extended Project Qualifications (EPQ) and Advanced Extension Awards (AEA) in maths including:

- How centre assessment grades will work
 - This will be undertaken by schools and colleges using their professional experience to make a fair and objective judgement of the grade they believe a student would have achieved had they sat their exams this year. This will take into account the full range of available evidence, including:
 - non-exam assessment
 - the results of any homework assignments or mock exams
 - any other records of student performance over the course of study.
 - Providing a rank order of students within each grade
 - Centre assessment grades or the rank order cannot be shared with students. More information will be given to teachers, students, parents and carers at the time final results are issued
 - The head of centre will need to confirm that the centre assessment grades, and the rank order of students are a true representation of student performance

- Awarding bodies will apply a statistical model to standardise grades across centres in each subject
- The deadline for submitting centre assessment grades will not be earlier than 29 May
- Results days will be as originally scheduled – 13 August for GCEs and 20 August for GCSEs
- On the results slips and certificates, grades will be reported in the same way as in previous years
- The normal arrangements for reviews of marking and appeals will not apply
- Students will have the opportunity to take their exams in the autumn series or in summer 2021
- If students choose to take their exams in the autumn series or in summer 2021, they will be able to use the higher of the two grades for future progression

Ofqual has also launched a consultation (closing on 29 April) seeking views on a number of features of the exceptional arrangements for awarding GCSEs, AS and A levels in 2020.

Areas to be confirmed

Despite encouraging progress in confirming many aspects of the process, the following areas are still to be resolved:

- The process for vocational and technical qualifications, and general qualifications other than GCSEs, AS and A levels, Extended Project Qualifications and Advanced Extension Award in maths
- How and when centre assessment grades (and the rank order of students within each grade) should be submitted to awarding bodies
- The principles of the statistical model to standardise grades across centres in each subject. It is assumed that the model will look at evidence such as:
 - the expected national outcomes for this year's students/expected grade distributions at national level
 - the prior attainment of students at centre level
 - the results in previous years at individual centre level
- Whether centre assessment grades will be released to students following the issue of final results
- The arrangements for an effective appeals process
- Fees for all aspects of the exam process
- Arrangements for early entrants, including students in year 10
- The arrangements for private candidates
- The process for receiving grades from awarding bodies
- Arrangements for restricted release of results
- University applications where the required grade has not been achieved
- Autumn exam series:
 - when this will take place
 - how long it will last
 - entry fees
 - key dates/deadlines
 - qualifications/subjects to be offered
 - JCQ regulations – whether 2019/2020 or 2020/2021 regulations will apply
 - centres where the autumn exam series will be delivered
 - the date for the publication of final results
- The process for disseminating certificates from this summer's awarding/autumn exam series
- The staging of GCSE maths and English resits following the autumn exam series

It is in many of these areas where exams officers will play a significant role and *The Exams Office* will ensure that the impact on its members is highlighted when decisions are made in relation to these aspects of the process.

We will pay particular attention to influencing any decision which unnecessarily increases the workload of exams officers or has a detrimental impact on their ability to undertake other day-to-day tasks within their centre.

To ensure that the voice of the exams officer community is heard, we have already forwarded our recommendations to Ofqual which include extending the November 2020 exam series to incorporate the proposed autumn exam series. *The Exams Office* has also suggested applying 2019/2020 JCQ regulations to this series, primarily to ease the pressure on centres having to train/update invigilators within a short period of time at the start of the new academic year.

Beyond this summer's awarding process

Once this summer's awarding process is finalised and completed there will be a return to business as usual. Therefore, *The Exams Office* is keen to ensure continuity for our members and press ahead with the following:

- The creation of a national association to represent exams officers. This organisation will have the sole focus of raising the profile and status of the exams officer community. Please note that the [consultation for the launch of a national association](#) ends on 4 May.
- Encouraging and supporting JCQ in publishing 2020/2021 regulations as per initial deadlines to allow exams officers to prepare for the new academic year
- Recommending a proposal for centres to deliver at least one set of mock exams in the final year of certification in line with JCQ regulations. We appreciate that, although such a measure could be used as a contingency measure against future disruption to a final exam series, and increase the significance and profile of exams officers and invigilators within centres and the assessment process, it could also result in additional workload for some exams officers. *The Exams Office* will consult with its members regarding this proposal
- The design and content for *The Exams Office's Exams Officer Desk Diary* and *Exams Wall Planner* (which will be sent to all members in early September)
- Planning for the autumn training events – *Actions for Autumn* for new exams officers and *Exam changes 2020/2021* for experienced exams officers
- Developing additional online tools, including the *Exams Officer Qualification* and adding additional policies to our *Policy Generator Tool*
- Devising new, and updating existing, online guides, checklists and templates

The Exams Office was established in 2014 as a support organisation for exams officers, and to provide quality resources to enable centres to manage, administer and conduct exams and assessments in line with regulations set by the JCQ and the awarding bodies.

However, since 2014, thanks to the positive relationships developed with key stakeholders, *The Exams Office* has also assumed the responsibility of effectively representing the exams officer community.

The benefits of this positive way of working with key organisations is now being seen as the views of exams officers are being sought and recognised by the authorities as they look to confirm this summer's grade awarding process.

Note: This update is based upon Ofqual information available on 20 April 2020.