

Exams and assessments in 2021/2022



Department
for Education

ofqual

Exams and assessments in 2021/2022

- It is the government's firm intention that students in England will take exams in summer 2022
- To help ensure that exams and assessments can go ahead and are fair, the DfE and Ofqual have put in place a range of mitigations. These include:
 - Adaptations to non-exam assessment
 - Adaptations to exams and exam aids in some GCSE subjects; advance information about the focus of the content of exams in the majority of GCSE, AS and A Level subjects
 - Timetabling of exams to reduce the risk of students missing all exams in a subject

Exams and assessments in 2021/2022 (cont.)

- Students who miss one or more exams in a subject being able to achieve a grade through the special consideration process, so long as they have completed the assessment for at least one component of the qualification
- Guidance for centres on how to ensure exams can be conducted safely
- General advice on contingency planning from Ofqual

Non-exam assessment in 2022: GCSE, AS & A Level

- Some changes have 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
- Where a GCSE, AS or A Level includes non-exam assessment (NEA), such as **dance, design and technology, drama (and theatre), film studies, food preparation and nutrition, media studies, music, music technology, and physical education (PE)**, 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

Non-exam assessment in 2022: GCSE, AS & A Level

- If exams go ahead, 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 **GCSE, AS and A Level art and design**:
 - Students will not be assessed through an awarding body set task
 - Qualifications will be awarded on the basis of a student's portfolio only

Non-exam assessment in 2022: GCSE, AS & A Level

GCSE English Language

- No requirement for teachers to submit an audio-visual recording of a sample of students undertaking their spoken language assessments

Non-exam assessment in 2022: GCSE, AS & A Level

GCSE MFL

- Teachers and students should prepare for spoken language in 2022 to be assessed in the normal way, through formal speaking tests
- Ofqual will publish contingency assessment arrangements for spoken language that include assessment criteria, which reflect the arrangements used in 2021. If, at any point before the speaking tests begin, it becomes clear they cannot or should not be taken, the contingency arrangements will be implemented
- Awarding bodies will not have to include vocabulary that is not on the vocabulary lists for assessments

Fieldwork in 2022: GCSE, AS & A Level

Fieldwork

- No requirement for centres to confirm that they have given students the opportunity to carry out a specified number of fieldwork activities in **geography, geology and environmental science qualifications**
- **GCSE and AS geography** written exams will not include questions about fieldwork students have undertaken themselves
- NEA for **A Level geography** is retained with awarding bodies to consider how they can be flexible in their requirements for students to use primary data
- Schools and colleges can continue to provide fieldwork activities for their students if they are able to do so

Exams and assessments in 2021/2022

- On 12 July 2021, the DfE and Ofqual confirmed that exams and assessments are expected to take place in 2022 and launched two joint consultations on proposed arrangements to mitigate disruption to students' education
 - Arrangements for **GCSEs, AS and A Levels** in summer 2022 (consultation closed 1 August; decisions confirmed 30 September)
 - Arrangements for **vocational, technical and other general qualifications** in 2021/2022 (consultation closed 26 July; decisions confirmed 6 August)

GCSE, AS and A Level: Consultation decisions

- The adjustments to assessments and additional support announced by the DfE and Ofqual on 30 September apply to summer 2022
- It is the government's firm intention that exams in 2023 will go ahead as normal

GCSE, AS and A Level: Consultation decisions

Changes to arrangements for assessment/advance information

- Students taking **GCSEs in English literature, history, ancient history and geography** will not need to cover the usual range of content/topics in the exams
- To support revision, students taking **GCSEs in all other subjects and AS and A Levels** will be given advance information about the focus of the content of the exams. This will be published no later than 7 February 2022
- If circumstances require, advance information may be published ahead of 7 February. At least a week's notice of publication will be given

GCSE, AS and A Level: Consultation decisions

Support materials

- Students taking **GCSEs in 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
- Awarding bodies will provide copies of the formulae and equation sheets for use in teaching and to ensure that students are familiar with it prior to the exams. Clean copies will be provided in the exams

GCSE, AS and A Level: Consultation decisions

GCSE English language and mathematics - November 2022

- Advance information will also be provided for GCSE English language and mathematics in the November 2022 series
- This will be different advance information to the summer series and will be released in July 2022
- For the GCSE mathematics exams in November 2022 the same formulae sheets will be provided as for summer 2022 exams

GCSE, AS and A Level: Consultation decisions

Practical science work

- Centres will be allowed to deliver practical work by demonstration for the following qualifications:
 - **GCSE biology, chemistry, physics, combined science, geology and astronomy**
 - **AS Level biology, chemistry, physics and geology**
 - **AS and A Level environmental science**
- Centres are encouraged to continue to make available hands-on practical activities for students wherever possible

GCSE, AS and A Level: Consultation decisions

Practical science work

- Centres will be allowed to assess the Common Practical Assessment Criteria (CPAC) across the minimum number of practical activities required to enable students to demonstrate their competence in:
 - **A Level biology, chemistry, physics and geology**
- Awarding bodies can carry out remote monitoring of centres' application of the CPAC

GCSE, AS and A Level summer 2022 timetables

- The consultation on arrangements for GCSEs, AS and A Levels did not propose a delay to the exam period and the summer 2022 exam series will take place at the same time as in a typical year
- Final timetables for summer 2022 were published in early November

GCSE, AS and A Level summer 2022 timetables

- Exams start on Monday 16 May and end on Tuesday 28 June
- The contingency day is scheduled for Wednesday 29 June
- Papers in the same subject are spaced out as much as possible to give students the best possible opportunity to take at least one paper in a subject, in the event that they are ill or self-isolating during the exam period (at least a 10-day gap between the first and last exam in a subject)

Vocational and technical qualifications (VTQs)

- On 6 August, Ofqual and the DfE confirmed the arrangements for VTQs in 2021/2022

1

Exams and other assessments to go ahead in 2021/2022. Results for exams and assessments taken after 1 September will not be based on teacher assessed grades (TAGs)

2

DfE's expectation is that all qualification content should be taught

3

Awarding bodies will be permitted to make adaptations to their assessments and qualifications to assist in mitigating the ongoing impact of the pandemic

4

Ofqual will implement minor changes to the VCRF (Vocational and technical contingency regulatory framework) to reflect the context of 2021/2022

Summer 2022 results

- On 30 September, the DfE confirmed that AS, A Level and GCSE results will return to their normal format
 - **AS and A Level: 18 August 2022**
 - **GCSE: 25 August 2022**
- Results for vocational and technical qualifications (VTQs) used alongside or instead of GCSEs, AS and A Levels will be issued on or before the same days

GCSE, AS and A Level: Ofqual's approach to grading

- On 30 September, Ofqual confirmed the approach to grading for summer 2022
- The approach is intended to get back to the pre-pandemic standard but not in one jump
- 2022 will be a 'transition year' that recognises disruption and provides a safety net for students who might otherwise just miss out on a higher grade
- Results overall will be higher than in 2019, but not as high as in 2020
- The aim is for 2022 to 'reflect a midway point between 2021 and 2019' with the aim to return to results that are in line with those in pre-pandemic years' in 2023

Contingency arrangements: GCSE, AS, A Level, Project qualifications and AEA in mathematics

- A joint consultation by the DfE and Ofqual was launched on 30 September. It closed on 13 October
- On 11 November, it was confirmed that if exams are cancelled in summer 2022, students' grades will be determined by their teachers, using a Teacher Assessed Grade (TAG) approach similar to that used in summer 2021
- Details of how TAGs will be determined in summer 2022 will be announced if they are required, and decisions will take account of the timing of the decision to cancel exams and any public health restrictions in place at the time

Contingency arrangements: Conditions and content for student assessment

- 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 by covering the assessment objectives for the qualification
- 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

Contingency arrangements: Conditions and content for student assessment

- 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

Contingency arrangements: Conditions and content for student assessment

- Wherever possible, a centre must either assess all students who are taking a particular qualification using the same material at the same time or using different materials at different times
- Students taking **Project qualifications** do not take exams. Project qualifications use non-examination 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. Students should be encouraged and supported to complete their Project assessments as usual

Contingency arrangements: When should students 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

Contingency arrangements: Assessment materials

- Assessments should be similar to full or parts of the exam papers they are preparing to take next summer
- Past papers can 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

Contingency arrangements: Student awareness

- 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
- 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
- Students should not be given the opportunity to repeat an assessment, for example to improve their mark in response to feedback

Contingency arrangements: Reasonable adjustments

- 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

Contingency arrangements: Special consideration

- 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

Contingency arrangements: Marking assessments

- 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
- Teachers should also be clear that the marking and grading have not been quality assured

Contingency arrangements: Marking assessments

- 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 until specific guidance has been set on the determination of TAGs for 2022, which will only be available if exams are cancelled

Contingency arrangements: Appeals and quality assurance

Appeals

- Decisions about the appeals process are still to be made. Ofqual are analysing the appeal arrangements in place for summer 2021 and will use their findings before deciding how appeals would work in 2022 should exams be cancelled

Quality assurance

- Exam centres will only be required to develop centre policies for the awarding of TAGs if exams are cancelled

Conducting exams – ten areas to consider if restrictions are in place

1. **Invigilators** – vulnerable group, adequate numbers, training, safety
2. **PPE and sanitisation** – for invigilators, candidates and equipment
3. **Rooming** – layout, ventilation, distancing
4. **Entering the examination room** – queueing, large cohorts
5. **Equipment** – supplying and sharing equipment
6. **During the examination** – candidate/invigilator interaction
7. **After the examination** – disposing of waste, sanitisation
8. **Access arrangements** – assistive technology, rooming, equipment
9. **Results day(s)** – disseminating results, equipment, interactions with staff
10. **Contingency** – invigilator shortage, exams officer absence, local lockdown, centre health issues