

ofqual



A view from the regulator

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Roles and responsibilities

■ Ofqual

- Sets rules to ensure regulated qualifications will deliver valid and reliable outcomes
- Regulates exam boards to ensure they develop, deliver and award qualifications that meet our requirements

■ Exam boards

- Develop qualifications that meet government policy (curriculum) and our regulatory rules (assessment design)
- Issue accurate results on time

■ Government

- Produce the national curriculum, including subject specific content requirements for GCSEs and A levels
- Decide on how qualifications should be used for school and college accountability purposes

Roles and responsibilities during the pandemic

- **Government** takes decisions about closing schools and colleges and whether exams can go ahead as planned
- **Government** takes decisions about qualifications policy, including changes to subject content requirements and accountability arrangements
- **Joint Ofqual/DfE** consultation on changes to assessment arrangements, with decisions reflecting areas of responsibility
- **Joint Ofqual/DfE** consultation on contingency arrangements, with decisions reflecting areas of responsibility
- **Ofqual** consultation and decisions on changes to non-exam assessment
- **Ofqual takes** decisions on the process for awarding TAGs if they are needed, informed by consultation responses and government policy

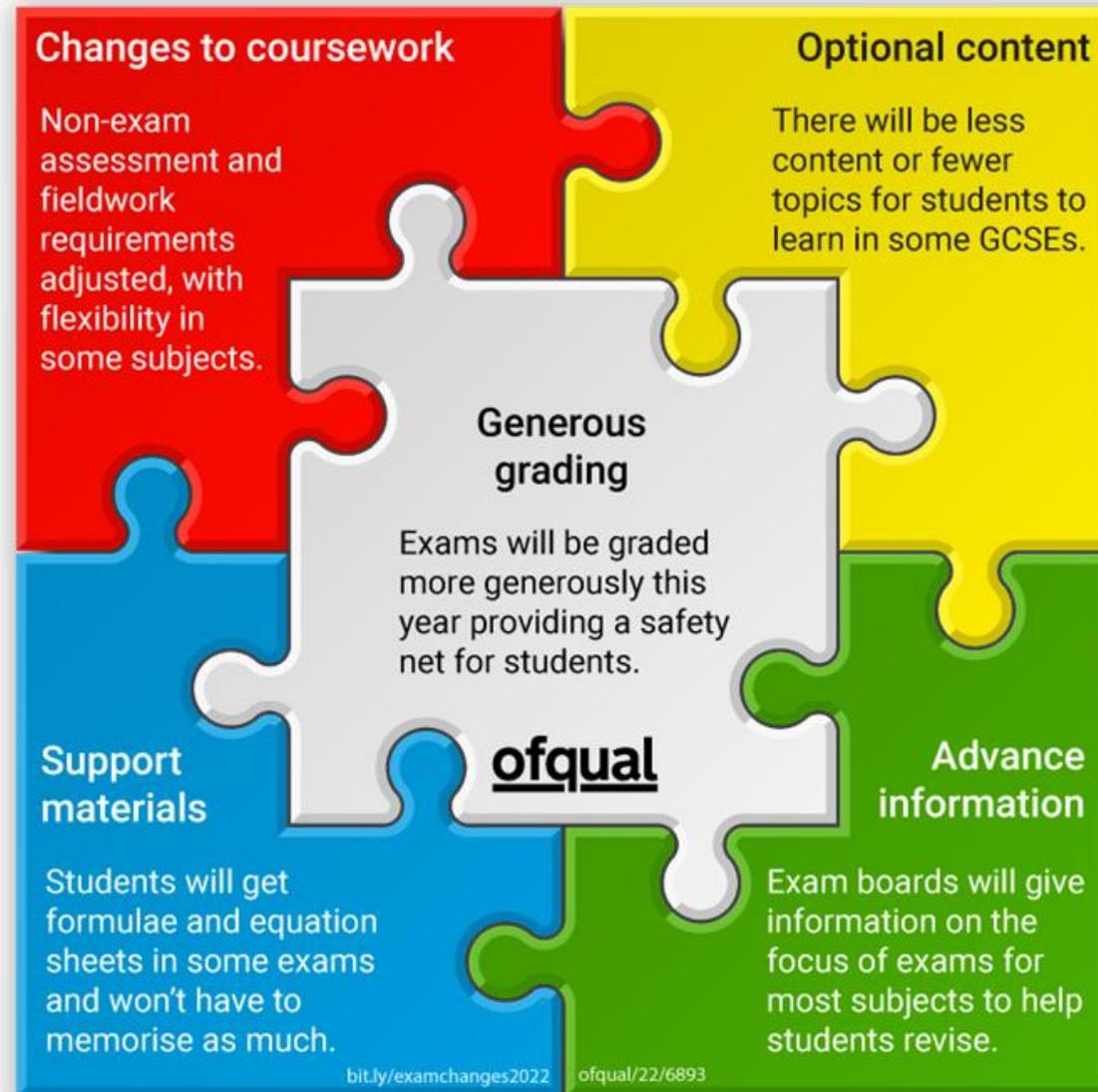
Thank you!

- We recognise the vital contribution exams officers make to the effective working of the exam system
- We know you have been vital points of contact for the exam boards during the pandemic, and how busy you have been delivering the system in 2020 and 2021.
- In 2021, 1.2 million students received grades for GCSE, AS and A levels despite exams not being able to go ahead due to the pandemic.
- Staff at schools and exam centres, submitted 5.7 million Teacher Assessed Grades for students in England last summer.
- **Thank you** for your critical role in this.

Exams in 2022

- Expectation is that exams will go ahead
- A range of adaptations have been announced as part of a package of measures
- It will be the first time sitting public exams for almost all students
- For some exams officers it will also be the first experience of a full exam series – and even for those who have been through it before it has been three years
- We know that you will be spending time familiarising (or refreshing) your understanding of the processes
- Exams take place 16 May to 28 June – and remember the contingency day on 29 June

Exams in 2022: A package of measures



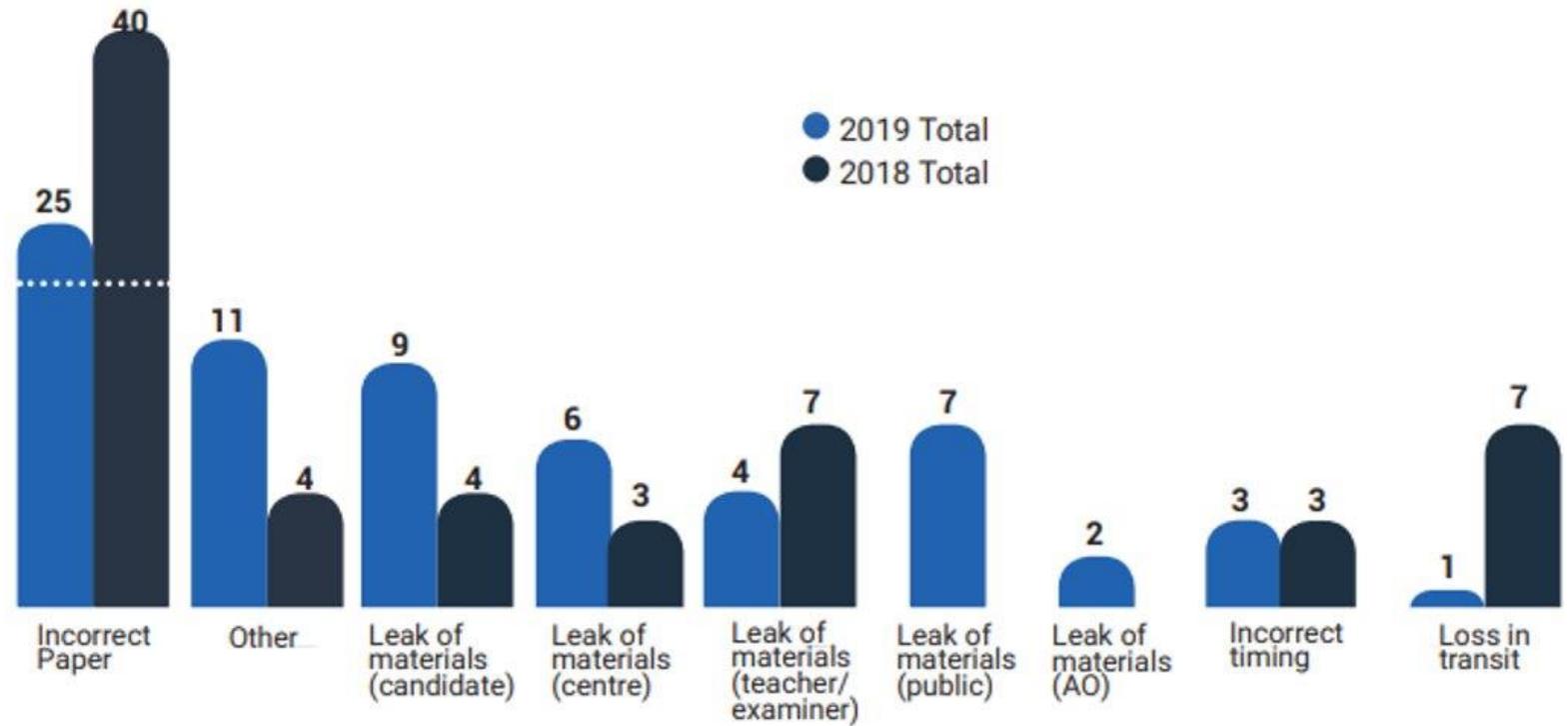
Release of advance information

- Advance information has been published for over 300 specifications. Normally, specifications for the same subject contain some differences between boards, within clearly defined parameters.
- The advance information reflects this as each piece of advanced information has been tailored to the relevant subject and specification.
- Advance information takes different forms, for example:
 - a list of topics that will be the focus of the exam, or parts of it
 - identification of part of a set text, from which the extract used in the exam will be taken
- The materials have been carefully designed to provide guidance to teachers and students to help focus revision. If there are questions about the advance information, please get in touch with the relevant exam board.

Ensuring exams go smoothly

- Problems are rare
- If we look back at 2019 clear progress has been made in reducing security breaches
- As we move back to exams, it's important that we all do everything we can to continue this trend

Types of security breaches



Malpractice and maladministration

- We recognise the important role that people play in the safe running of the exam system, and exams officers in particular
- Malpractice or maladministration can come from a variety of sources – centres, staff, students
- Incidences of centre and staff malpractice fell year on year from 2017 to 2019, when summer exams last took place
- Student malpractice increased in 2019. The most common type is taking a mobile phone or other device, into the exam room
- Many students have not previously taken formal exams- it's essential to make sure they are aware of the rules!

Reducing opportunities for things to go wrong

- The following are based on real issues we have seen in previous years
- We know that you take these issues seriously and serious issues are relatively few in number – the vast majority of the time things go right.
- For those of you who have not seen these issues, they might highlight what can happen and illustrate what lies behind some of the rules

Appropriate Supervision



Example

A small number of students had been placed in separate rooms for exams as a result of challenging behaviours

Adequate supervision was not given to students

Students were able to use mobile phones in the exam room

- Ensure you are only using separate rooms where it is necessary to do so
- Ensure that students are aware of the rules and potential sanctions of taking prohibited items into the exam room
- Ensure that all students have adequate supervision at all times

Exam paper security

Example



Early in the morning of the exam, an Exams Officer mistakenly emailed a GCSE English Language paper to all staff instead of to the reprographics department.

The email was recalled soon after the mistake was realised but some recipients opened the message breaching confidential material. The Exams Officer reported the error immediately.

- Always take the utmost care when handling and copying any papers.
- Avoid sending exam papers via email.
- When dealing with exam papers, always exercise extreme caution.
- Do the right thing - make sure that you report any errors immediately.

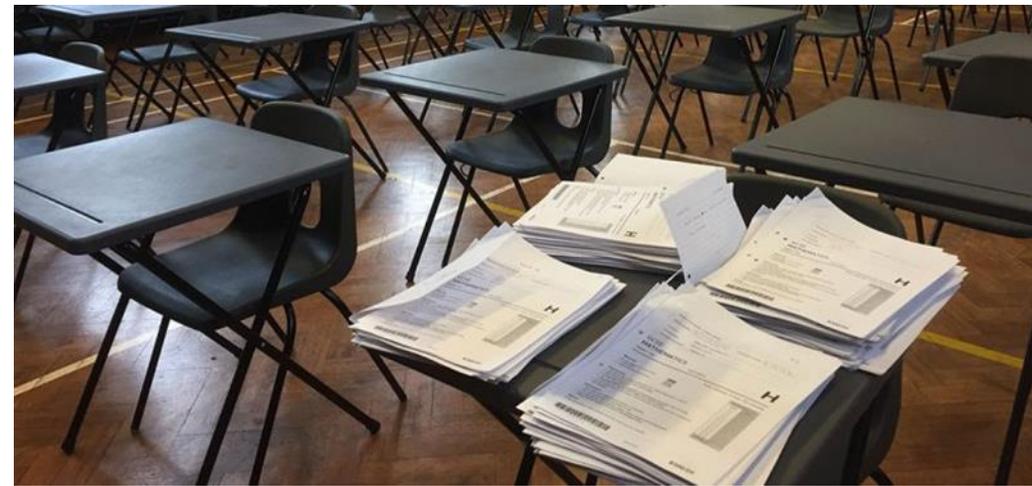
Exam paper security

Example

An Exams Officer opened a GCSE maths paper one day early as they wanted to be more organised ahead of a busy exam day.

- Ensure that there are sufficient trained staff to allow you to complete all tasks effectively, and challenge your manager if this is not the case.
- Ensure you are clear and confident on the rules and requirements of JCQ or the relevant awarding organisation.
- We understand the challenges that come with your role, and the pressures on your time.

Exam paper security



Example

An Exams Officer, new to the role, opened all of the GCSE and A level question paper packets from the delivery the previous day to ensure the correct number of papers had been received.

- Ensure that you ask your centre to provide appropriate training.
- Ensure you are clear and confident on the rules and requirements of JCQ or the relevant awarding organisation.
- Identify who would step into your role if you were ill or unavailable
- Ensure that there are clear instructions for anyone who might have to step in.

Making entries

Example:



Some centres made a number of late changes to their combined science entries

A number of small packs (5 papers) for all three papers were sent in a separate dispatch to those centres

These were sometimes misfiled and/or incorrectly opened

■ Encourage subject staff:

- to ensure that entries are made on time
- to be realistic about their entries (e.g. tiers)
- not to change entries late in process (tiers/options etc)

Paper security

Example:

A centre identified that a number of packages had either AM/PM on front cover for same exam

They checked with AO and were able to identify that some packages had been incorrectly labelled

By checking early, prevented incorrect paper potentially being handed out

- Check deliveries and query any apparent inconsistencies
- Do NOT open the packages
- Store packages securely

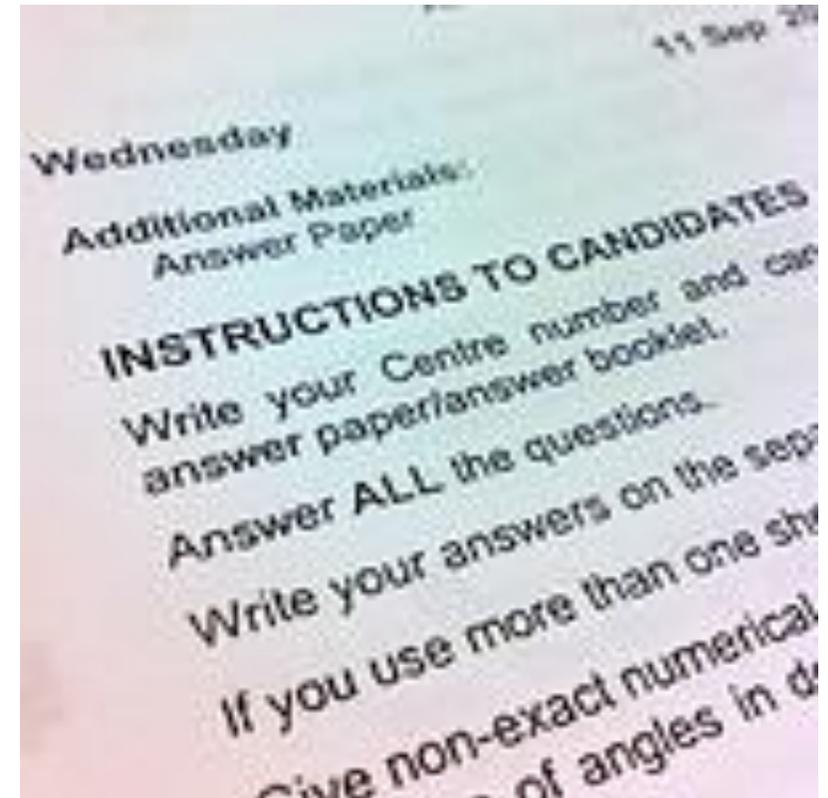


Error in exam paper

Example

A centre identifies an error in an exam paper. The curve in the graph in an A level maths paper is incorrectly described on the text, which could lead to students being confused and adversely affected.

- Pay attention to the exam paper and note any concerns raised by students (mistakes in exam papers are rare but do sometimes happen).
- Contact the relevant Awarding Organisation (AO) to raise the issue.
- The AO should provide advice and guidance to you on what to do next. If there is potentially an error, they can investigate and put in any measures necessary, so that students are not disadvantaged.



Suffering a cyber or ransomware attack

Example:

Your school or college has been victim to an IT security incident, potentially a cyber-attack or a ransomware attack.

The incident could impact on you accessing school records and student non-exam assessment data

- Contact the relevant awarding organisations to notify them of the issue.
- The AO will provide any help and support possible to help reduce any problems with assessments whilst you restore the IT system.
- The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) advise you to report cyber incidents relating to your school or college to Action Fraud.
- This type of incident is becoming more common. There is lots of helpful information on NCSC's website.



When things do go wrong...

- Don't panic!
- Three primary concerns:
 - Security of assessment
 - Validity of assessment
 - Fairness to all students
- Contain the issue
 - Keep students in room and supervised
- Contact AO and check protocol
- If any breach of secure materials then get confidentiality statements
 - Explain what they are signing
 - Ensure they know the serious consequences of any breach

Contingency plans for 2022 – gathering evidence

- We published guidance in November on how teachers should collect evidence about their students. This included:
 - The conditions under which students should be assessed
 - When students should be assessed
 - What they should be assessed on
- This guidance is intended to support centres 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.
- 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.

Contingency plans for 2022 – awarding TAGs

- Teachers must not attempt to determine TAGs unless the exams are cancelled and further guidance is published.
- Issuing guidance later about how to determine TAGs in 2022 will allow us to take account of the timing of the decision, the reason for the decision and any public health restrictions in place at the time.
- As outlined in our recent letter to centres following the publication of advance information, Ofqual's November 2021 guidance encourages teachers to take a proportionate approach if they are assessing students solely for the purpose of gathering evidence as part of contingency arrangements, and not to assess students more than necessary.

Private candidates

- As we expect exams to take place in 2022, we would encourage centres to make entries for private candidates in the usual way.
- Some private candidates might want centres to assess them throughout the year as part of contingency arrangements.
- If exams are cancelled, the Department for Education will again explore ways to encourage centres to work with private candidates and to provide affordable opportunities for private candidates to work with centres.

Internal contingencies

- **What plans does your centre have in place?**
- We know it is a difficult job, which cannot just be picked up without proper planning.
- Policies and procedures - you need to be familiar with these, but consider how you'd make sure these were still followed in your absence.
- Covid-proof - have you got contingencies in place for your own role?
- Exams officers are pivotal to the smooth running of exams!

Resources and key information

- Website – www.gov.uk/ofqual
- Rolling update - <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ofqual-rolling-update>
- Blog - ofqual.blog.gov.uk/
- For raising concerns: www.gov.uk/guidance/ofquals-whistleblowing-policy
- JCQ Instructions for conducting examinations: https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/ICE_21-22_v6.pdf
- Contact us: public.enquiries@ofqual.gov.uk

Questions?