

# Ofqual update 2026

## Supporting the successful delivery of exams and assessments

The Exams Office

National Senior Leader/Line Manager

Winter Conference 2026



# Summer 2025 exams and assessments

More than **1.3 million** students received GCSE, AS and A Level results at 6,011 centres

More than **6.5 million** results issued – GCSE, AS and A Level

**522,000** certificates for VTQ performance table qualifications

## Thank you !

For further details see Ofqual's 2025 Delivery report

# What is Ofqual's role?

To ensure that:

regulated qualifications reliably indicate the knowledge, skills and understanding students have demonstrated

people have confidence in the qualifications we regulate

schools and colleges have information on the full range of qualifications we regulate

# Maintaining standards...what does it mean?





# Grading

# Marking and grading in GCSEs and A Levels

ofqual



# Myth or fact?

Higher grade boundaries mean it's harder to achieve each grade

# Myth

**Higher grade  
boundaries mean  
it's harder to achieve  
each grade.**



# Myth or fact?

Grade boundaries are the same across all Exam Boards

## Myth



**Grade boundaries  
are the same across  
all Exam Boards**

# Myth or fact?

There's no quota for the number of students that can get any grade

# Fact

**There's no quota  
for the number  
of students that  
can get any grade.**



# Grading - Facts

Grade boundaries  
can change

Exam boards set  
grade boundaries



Standards maintained  
year on year

No cap on grades

# Summer 2026

# Exams and assessments 2026

## Supporting information

- [Ofqual guide for schools and colleges 2026 - GOV.UK](#)
- [Ofqual student guide to exams and assessments in 2026 - GOV.UK](#)
- [Info Hub](#) published in November

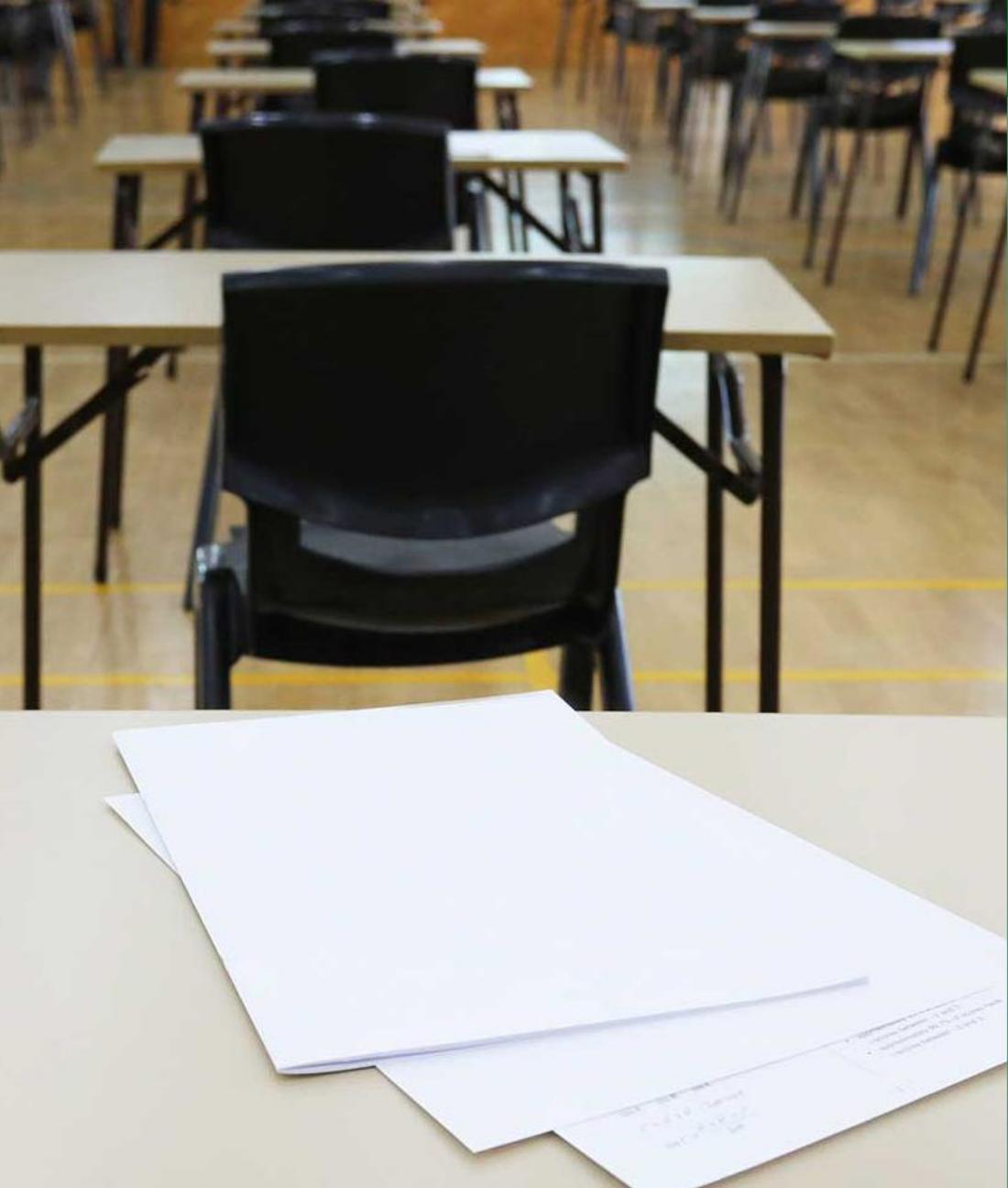
## Contingency sessions

- The morning and afternoon of **24 June 2026**

## Special consideration

- For illness, injury or event outside of control which affects ability to take assessment or affects performance
- Broader issues impacting teaching and learning are not eligible

# System resilience



## Resilience arrangements

- **Purpose** – to be able to provide evidence of student performance should exams and assessments not go ahead – in line with [Ofqual's guidance](#)

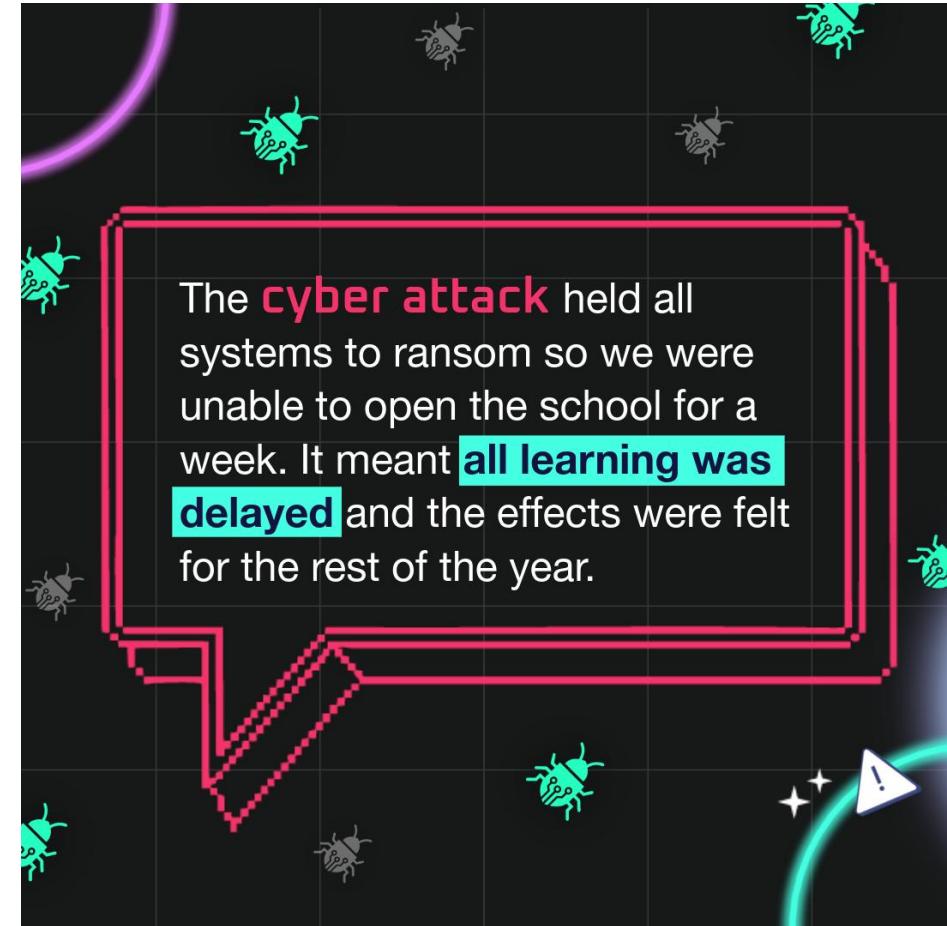
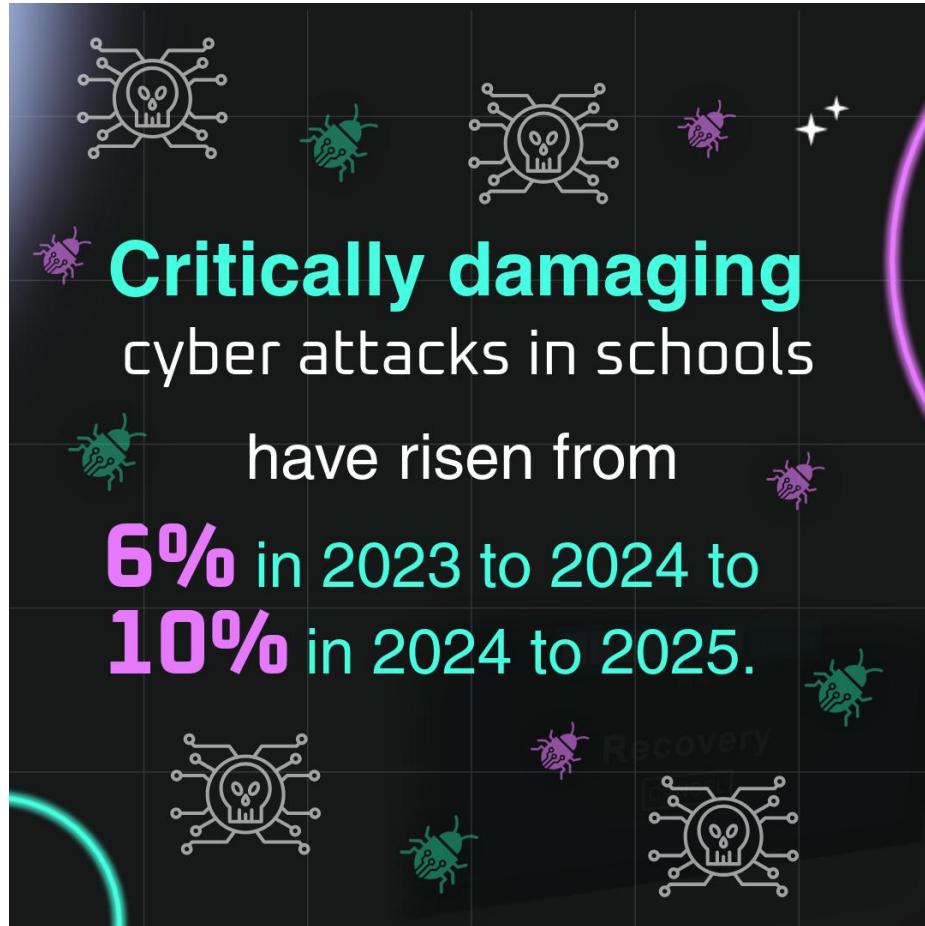
## Access arrangements

- **Ofqual** considers an **effective system** one that supports students to get **appropriate arrangements** for their needs and is **manageable** for schools and colleges, and commands **public confidence**

## Malpractice

- **5,025** penalties issued to students in 2025
- **44.3%** of these involved mobile phones or other communications device

# Cyber security



[NCSC Guidance](#)

# Developments to exams and assessments

# On-screen assessment



Ofqual is consulting **until 5 March** on a proposed approach to regulating OSA in GCSEs, AS and A levels in England [On-screen assessment](#)



OSA could benefit some students, but fairness a priority



Aims to support responsible innovation



Paper-based exams will remain central

# Artificial intelligence

Students must not use AI to produce work they claim as their own

Be aware of risks for exam and non-exam assessments

JCQ guidance: centres must ensure authenticity, prevent misuse, and require acknowledgement of any AI use

AI must not be the sole marker of any component, including non-exam assessment

# Reform

Vocational & Technical Qualifications: New qualifications **V Levels** (L3), **Foundation Certificates** (L2), **Occupational Certificates** (L2)

Nationally-set content, consistent grading, phased roll-out from **2027**

GCSEs/A Levels: proposals such as update subject content, explore on-screen assessment, strengthen resilience

Maintain progression routes and standards

# When Ofqual can help you

Enquiries

EPRS

Complaints

Malpractice  
allegations

Whistleblowing

Freedom of  
Information

[Contact Ofqual - GOV.UK](#)

## Additional resources

- [Exams and assessment checklist for exam officers - GOV.UK](#)
- [Ofqual guide for schools and colleges 2026 - GOV.UK](#)
- [Ofqual student guide to exams and assessments in 2026 - GOV.UK](#)
- [Guidance on collecting evidence of student performance to ensure resilience in the qualifications system - GOV.UK](#)
- ['ICE' – Instructions for conducting examinations - JCQ Joint Council for Qualifications](#)
- [AI Use in Assessments: Your role in protecting the integrity of qualifications - JCQ Joint Council for Qualifications](#)

