

## Information on the cancellation of the 2020 external examinations for Year 11 and Year 13 students

The national government has cancelled this summer's external exams as part of their attempts to stop the further spread of coronavirus. This year's summer exam series, including A levels, GCSEs and other qualifications, and all primary assessments, have been cancelled as part of the fight to stop the spread of coronavirus.

Ofqual (The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation) is the government department that regulates qualifications, exams and tests in England. Following the government announcement, Ofqual has welcomed the further information the Department for Education has outlined recently to award students a calculated grade for their GCSEs, AS and A levels this summer, and to provide an exam option for those that wish it as soon as is reasonably possible after schools reopen.

Ofqual is working to develop a fair and consistent process. **Work is already underway with exam boards to develop proposals and they will provide more detail in the coming weeks.** The exam boards will award grades to students whose exams have been cancelled this summer.

University representatives have confirmed that they expect universities to be flexible and do all they can to support Year 13 students and ensure they can progress to higher education.

The government's priority is now to ensure affected students can move on as planned to the next stage of their lives, including going into employment, starting university, college or sixth form courses, or an apprenticeship in the autumn.

This means ensuring GCSE, A and AS level students are awarded a grade which fairly reflects the work that they have put in. There will also be an option to sit an exam early in the next academic year for students who wish to. Ofqual will develop and set out a process that will provide a calculated grade to each student which reflects their performance as fairly as possible, and will work with the exam boards to ensure this is consistently applied for all students. The exam boards will be liaising with schools so that they can have an input into submitting their judgement about the grade that they believe a student would have received if exams had gone ahead.

To produce this, schools will take into account a range of evidence and data including performance on trial/mock/preliminary exams and non-exam assessment – **clear guidance on how to do this fairly and robustly will be provided to schools shortly.** The exam boards will then combine this information with other relevant data, including prior attainment, and use this information to produce a calculated grade for each student, which will be a best assessment of the work students have put in.

Ofqual and exam boards will be discussing with teachers' representatives before finalising an approach, to ensure that it is as fair as possible. The aim is to provide calculated grades to students before the end of July. In terms of a permanent record, the grades will be indistinguishable from those provided in other years. Ofqual will also aim to ensure that the distribution of grades follows a similar pattern to that in other years, so that this year's students do not face a systematic disadvantage as a consequence of these extraordinary circumstances.

The government has further announced that they recognise that some students may nevertheless feel disappointed that they haven't been able to sit their exams and therefore may be able to appeal the grade the exam board awards. In addition, if students do not feel their calculated grade reflects their performance, they will have the opportunity to sit an exam at the earliest reasonable

opportunity, once schools are open again. Students will also have the option to sit their exams in summer 2021.

There is a very wide range of different vocational and technical qualifications as well as other academic qualifications for which students were expecting to sit exams this summer. These are offered by a large number of awarding organisations, and have differing assessment approaches – in some cases students will already have completed modules or non-exam assessment which could provide evidence to award a grade. The government is encouraging these organisations to show the maximum possible flexibility and pragmatism to ensure students are not disadvantaged. **Ofqual is working urgently with the examination sector to explore options and they intend to provide more detail for schools in due course.**

Below is a link to the Department for Education (DfE) 'Frequently Asked Questions' site about the cancellation of this summer's exams – you might find this site helpful in providing further information.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-cancellation-of-gcses-as-and-a-levels-in-2020/coronavirus-covid-19-cancellation-of-gcses-as-and-a-levels-in-2020>