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### Coronavirus (COVID-19): what you need to do

#### Stay at home

- Only go outside for food, health reasons or work (but only if you cannot work from home)
- If you go out, stay 2 metres (6ft) away from other people at all times
- Wash your hands as soon as you get home

Do not meet others, even friends or family.

You can spread the virus even if you don't have symptoms.

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Department  
for Education

Guidance

## Coronavirus (COVID-19): cancellation of GCSEs, AS and A levels in 2020

Updated 3 April 2020

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## **1. Did exams need to be cancelled?**

From Friday 20 March, all educational settings are closed to everyone except the children of critical workers and vulnerable children.

The coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak is expected to continue having a significant impact on the education system, and the country, for months to come. Therefore, exams have been cancelled now to give pupils, parents, and teachers certainty, and enable schools and colleges to focus on supporting vulnerable children and the children of key workers.

## **2. What will happen to those who have already done some non-exam assessment?**

Students who were due to sit A level, AS level or GCSE exams this summer will receive a calculated grade. The calculated grade process will take into account a range of evidence including, for example, non-exam assessment and mock results, and the approach will be standardised between schools and colleges. There's separate guidance from Ofqual on [awarding GCSE, AS and A levels](#) which includes the implications for non-exam assessment.

## **3. How will you address the fact that students from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to have their grades under-predicted?**

This summer's calculated grades are not predicted grades. Ofqual, the independent qualifications regulator, is developing a fair and robust process that takes into account a broad range of evidence, including assessments by schools and colleges of the grades that students would have been likely to obtain if exams went ahead and their prior attainment. Ofqual will make every effort to ensure that the process does not disadvantage any particular group of students.

Pupils who do not feel their calculated grade reflects their ability will have the opportunity to sit an exam as soon as is reasonably possible after schools and colleges open again.

## **4. Will all students get their predicted grade?**

No. We know that simply using predicted grades would not be fair to all students. The 'centre assessment grade' which the exam boards will ask schools and colleges to submit for A and AS levels and GCSEs will take into account an assessment of the likely grade that students would have obtained had exams gone ahead, and these will be standardised across schools and colleges. For this reason, students' final calculated grades will not necessarily reflect their predicted grades.

## **5. Will schools be using mock exam results as a barometer for results – and is this fair on students as they did not know at the time these would be used as their final mark?**

Mock exam results will be one of the pieces of evidence that will be taken into account in this process, alongside other factors. There's separate guidance from Ofqual on [awarding GCSE, AS and A levels](#) which explains to schools and

colleges how to do this fairly and robustly.

## **6. Will the past performance of the school be taken into account when devising the calculated grade?**

Ofqual's guidance says that one of the sources of evidence schools and colleges should draw on is the performance of this year's students compared to those in previous years. However, this is only one of the sources of evidence that will be taken into account.

## **7. Is this an entirely new system?**

This is a new system, but one which builds on existing practices, as education professionals are used to making holistic judgements about their students. These judgements will be standardised at national level to give grades that are as fair as possible.

## **8. Will universities, colleges and sixth forms accept these grades?**

The calculated grades awarded this summer will be formal grades, with the same status as grades awarded in any other year. They will therefore be accepted by all institutions.

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

## **9. What if I am unhappy with my calculated grade?**

Ofqual and the exam boards are working to ensure that candidates are awarded a fair grade that recognises the work they have put in. If an A level, AS level or GCSE student does not believe the correct process has been followed in their case they will be able to appeal on that basis. Ofqual will consult shortly on the arrangements for these appeals. In addition, if a student does not feel their grade reflects their performance, they will have the opportunity to sit an exam, as soon as is reasonably possible after schools and colleges open again. Students will also have the option to sit their exams in summer 2021, in line with usual practice.

## **10. What about private candidates or home educated students?**

Where schools and colleges have accepted entries from external candidates (students who they have not taught themselves, because they have been home-schooled, following distance-learning programmes or studying independently), those students should be taken account of in the process of producing centre assessment grades, where the head teacher or principal is confident that they and their staff have seen sufficient evidence of the student's achievement to make an objective judgement.

Ofqual is also exploring urgently whether there are options for those students who do not have an existing relationship with an exams centre and who need results this summer for progression purposes, and will provide an update as soon as possible. Unfortunately, this is unlikely to be possible for all external candidates, some of whom may instead need to take exams in the autumn to get their grades.

Ofqual has asked organisations that represent higher and further education providers to consider the steps that providers could take when making admissions decisions this summer for any private candidates who do not receive a grade. They have said that they believe that institutions will consider a range of other evidence and information for these students to allow them to progress wherever possible.

## **11. Can private centres run GCSEs or A levels if they chose to do so?**

No. Exam boards will not be issuing papers for this summer's GCSE, AS and A levels so there will not be the opportunity to sit them at any centre.

## **12. Does this mean every exam in every module in every subject being cancelled, or will a limited number go ahead at GCSE and/or A level?**

Exam boards will not be issuing papers for this summer's GCSE, AS and A levels so there will not be the opportunity to sit them in any subject.

### **13. What about vocational and technical qualifications?**

Many students will be taking vocational or technical qualifications instead of or alongside GCSEs, AS and A levels. While this process does not apply to those qualifications, the same aims apply. Our priority is to ensure that students and adult learners taking vocational and technical qualifications can move on as planned to the next stage of their lives, including starting university, college or sixth form courses, or apprenticeships in the autumn or getting a job or progressing in work.

Ofqual is working urgently with awarding organisations to develop an approach and will provide further information as soon as possible.

### **14. Will students be required to do further work to contribute towards their grade?**

There is no requirement for schools and colleges to set additional mock exams or homework tasks for the purposes of determining a centre assessment grade, and no student should be disadvantaged if they are unable to complete any work set after schools were closed. Where additional work has been completed after schools and colleges were closed on 20 March, Ofqual is advising head teachers and principals to exercise caution where that evidence suggests a change in performance. In many cases this is likely to reflect the circumstances and context in which the work is done.

### **15. Can schools and colleges take incomplete coursework into account?**

Ofqual's guidance on [awarding GCSE, AS and A levels](#) makes clear that schools and colleges do not need to ask students to complete any unfinished non-exam assessment work for the purposes of grading. Where they do choose to take into account coursework completed after 20 March, Ofqual is advising head teachers and principals to exercise caution where that evidence suggests a change in performance. In many cases this is likely to reflect the circumstances and context in which the work is done.

### **16. What will young people with university offers do?**

The grades awarded this summer will be formal grades, with the same status as grades awarded in any other year. There is no reason for the usual admissions cycle to be disrupted.

University representatives have already confirmed that they expect universities to do all they can to support students and ensure they can progress to higher education

### **17. Do universities need to start making unconditional offers / should I accept an unconditional offer now that exams are cancelled?**

Universities should not begin making new unconditional offers and applicants should feel no pressure to accept such offers, as they will be awarded a formal calculated grade for each exam they would have taken.

### **18. If I already have an unconditional offer, does that remain?**

Yes. An unconditional offer means you have already met the entry requirements, so the place is yours if you want it.

### **19. If I take the exam option, will I still be able to go to university this year?**

Students who do not feel their calculated grade reflects their performance will have the opportunity to sit an exam as soon as is reasonably possible after the beginning of the academic year.

While it cannot be guaranteed in every circumstance, Universities UK has assured us that the majority of universities will do all they can to ensure that such students who take this option are able to begin their course with a delayed start time.

If a student is in this situation, they should speak to the university from which they have an offer after receiving their calculated grade.

### **20. Are iGCSEs and the International Baccalaureate also cancelled?**

Yes. Summer exams for both international GCSEs and the International Baccalaureate have been cancelled in all countries this year.

## 21. How will colleges, sixth forms and universities cope with the fact that these students will have missed out on some of their education?

These are extraordinary circumstances. We are working with schools, sixth forms, colleges and universities to ensure that we do everything we can to best help students prepare for and progress to the next stage of their education.

## 22. Might the exams be reinstated if the coronavirus (COVID-19) is not as bad as expected?

No. The decision has been taken to cancel all exams this summer.

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