***Reforms in the Examination Sector by 2021***

The majority of students are affected by the ongoing Covid 19 pandemic in 2020, and their guardians whether parents, teachers or educators are concerned about them appearing for competitive exams. Students preparing for assessments and examinations to be conducted in 2021, have stated that their education is severely affected by the coronavirus. Considering the disruptions caused by the coronavirus in the lives of people, there is a huge potential for creating public health safeguard measures. Therefore, there was a need to consult the authorities responsible for holding examinations in the country. Finally, reforms have been introduced in the examination sector which will reduce the pressure on students, will free up most of the teaching time and all the assessments in 2021 will be undertaken within measured health restrictions. Reforms introduced in the assessments have been listed below:

**Changes to GCSE, AS and A level Examinations**:

1. Changes are made to assessment of content in GCSE subjects like history and geography, which will help students as well as teachers to cover topics in depth.
2. To ease the pressure on majority of students who opt for choosing English Literature as one of their main subjects, the GCSE English literature examination will have a greater number of choices so that students can answer questions based on different topics.
3. GCSE, AS and A level examinations have introduced a range of modifications to non-exam arrangements. GCSE food preparation and nutrition measures are undertaken to accommodate public health requiremnets.
4. The importance of fieldwork is duly realized with time, hence from next year the GCSE, AS and A level subjects like geography, Astronomy, and Geology will assess students on the basis of the fieldwork.
5. Assessment on spoken language skills for grade 9 to 12 will be reported in 2021 examinations; a common assessment criterion will be delivered to teachers for marking students with flexibility over the oral component of the spoken language assessment.

**Changes Introduced in Paper Pattern**:

The latest reforms introduced in the examination sector includes changes in the paper pattern, and introduction of optional questions while introducing choices between different topics. Students will be assessed on the new examination pattern, where optional questions will provide a free hand over answering questions, but it is reminded that scoring less or more is evident when freedom of choice is provided. Changes like introduction of MCQs, shortening the length of the paper is also foreseen though it is not advised since it can prove to be another difficulty level for students who might not be familiar with these measures and couldn’t adapt to these changes.

**Changes in Vocational and Technical Qualifications**:

In order to support the approach of the latest reforms introduced in the examination pattern, several measures for introducing changes in vocational and technical qualifications have been undertaken by the authorities of the GCSE, AS and A level examination boards. Thus, in response to disruptions caused by the Covid 19 pandemic and supporting health concerns these measures help to mitigate the severe impact.

In 2021, assessments will still be able to deliver qualifications which are reliable and valid indication of understanding, knowledge, skills, and practical competence. Henceforth, maintaining the standards of the assessments the government has partnered with major organizations that will award the students on the basis of their performance. These measures provide greater flexibility in teaching and learning. Moreover, following social distancing even in group participations for project work.

**Changes to Examination Timings**:

Reforms have been introduced to examination timings in consultation with all the colleges and higher education boards so that examination will get postponed, thus providing enough time for students to prepare well for these assessments in 2021. In the light of introducing these measures, several students were disappointed since they assumed that conducting exams after a while than scheduled will result into a potential delay in the announcement of results.

**Contingency Plans and People’s Feedback**:

The OfEqual platform has provided the consultation or the feedback form on its official website where people can fill in their ideas supported by facts, so that there say can be heard by the government through the means of this platform. There is severe impact of the Covid 19 pandemic on the education sector in 2020, and it is still uncertain that everything will be restored to normal by 2021. Therefore, the authorities have developed several contingency plans while exploring different options of the assessment.

**Reforms in Quality and Examination Standards**:

The students will be offered reformed qualification standards from 2021, since they need reassurance regarding the outcomes of all the assessments which are coming next year. These reforms are undertaken to protect the interests of the aspirants preparing throughout the year and lessen the burden off their shoulders while approaching the grading system next year.