

# Update on Government Guidance for GCSE and A-Level Exams 2022 / 2023

Date: 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2021

Report of: The Director of Children and Families

Report to: Scrutiny Board (Children and Families)

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

## What is this report about?

### Including how it contributes to the city's and council's ambitions

- During the last meeting of the Children and Families Scrutiny Board, it was noted that the Council was awaiting updates from the government and Ofqual about awarding grades in 2022. Linked to this, a suggestion was made that the Scrutiny Board may want to hold a working group meeting to consider the implications for children in Leeds of forthcoming guidance for GCSE and A-level assessments for 2022, as well as issues linked to transition arrangements.
- Since the Board's meeting, a number of documents have been published by Ofqual and the DfE regarding the approach towards grading exams and assessments over the next two years. This includes decisions made in response to an earlier consultation which explains the adjustments being made to exams in 2022 in order to take account of the difficulties pupils have faced over the course of their study.
- Ofqual and the DfE also published a consultation document on 30th September 2021 on possible contingency arrangements in the event that exams cannot take place in 2022, which primarily sought views on proposed refinements to the Teacher Assessment Grade process. This consultation closed on 13<sup>th</sup> October 2021.
- This report has been provided by the Leadership and Management Lead for Children and Families Services and offers further details surrounding the current position.

## Recommendations

Scrutiny Board members are asked to note the updated government guidance and discuss the approach.

## Why is the proposal being put forward?

1. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, exams and assessments have been significantly disrupted over the past two academic years.
2. Subsequently, Ofqual has now published its approach to grading exams and assessments over the next two years, 2022 and 2023.
3. This report offers information on:
  - The approach to grading exams and assessments over the next two years.
  - Changes to examinations to be taken in 2022.
  - The position if exams cannot go ahead in 2022.

## What impact will this proposal have?

### Wards Affected:

Have ward members been consulted?      Yes      No

### How exams will be graded in 2022 and 2023.

4. Ofqual has published its approach to grading exams and assessments over the next two years. ([Ofqual's approach to grading exams and assessments in summer 2022 and autumn 2021 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#))
5. Grades issued to pupils in 2020 and 2021 were higher than those in 2019, because they were generated using a different system. Ofqual believes it would be unfair to pupils taking exams in 2022 to revert back immediately to results that are in line with those of 2019. Instead, 2022 will represent a mid-point between results from 2019 and 2020, whilst those in 2023 will be in line with those issued in 2019. Awarding organisations will be expected to take account of this approach to GCSE and A-level exams when setting standards for vocational and technical qualifications.
6. For 2022, teachers have been advised to use the familiar 2019 standard as the basis for predicting their students' Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) grades, giving borderline students the benefit of any doubt.
7. Some pupils may have chosen to take exams as part of the autumn exam series. These are for those students who want to improve on their grade from summer 2021 or who had planned to enter exams in summer 2021 but were unable to obtain a teacher assessed grade. For this reason, exam boards will seek to align autumn 2021 grading with summer 2021.

### Changes to examinations to be taken in 2022.

8. There have been some further adjustments to exams in 2022 in order to take account of the difficulties pupils have faced over the course of their study. These decisions, made following consultation, were published on 30<sup>th</sup> September. ([Decisions: proposed changes to the assessment of GCSEs, AS and A levels in 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#))
9. There will be optional topics and content in GCSE English literature, history, ancient history, and geography.

10. Centres will be allowed to deliver practical work in GCSE biology, chemistry, physics, combined science, geology, and astronomy, AS level biology, chemistry, physics, and geology, and AS and A-level environmental science by demonstration although centres are encouraged to continue to make available hands-on practical activities for their students wherever possible.
11. Centres will be allowed to assess the Common Practical Assessment Criteria (CPAC) across the minimum number of practical activities required to enable students to demonstrate their competence in A-level biology, chemistry, physics, and geology.
12. Exam boards can carry out remote monitoring of centres' application of the CPAC.
13. Students taking GCSE, AS and A-level art and design will be assessed on their portfolio only.
14. Exam boards will provide advance information about the focus of the content of the exams for all GCSE, AS and A-level subjects (except GCSE English literature, history, ancient history, and geography) for the summer 2022 exams.
15. Advance information will be provided by 7th February 2022, at the latest, to enable teachers to plan to adapt their teaching in the second half of the spring term if necessary. If there is further widespread and significant disruption to teaching and learning, the publication of advance information about the focus of the content of exams may be brought forward, to enable schools and colleges to focus their remaining teaching time. At least a week's notice will be given if decided that advance information will be released earlier than 7th February.
16. Students will be given a formulae sheet for GCSE mathematics in summer 2022 provided by exam boards. Clean copies of the formulae sheet will be provided in the exams.
17. Students will be given a revised equation sheet for GCSE physics and combined science in summer 2022, covering all the equations required in the subject content.
18. All 2022 Vocational and Technical Qualifications exams will go ahead but awarding organisations will be allowed to adapt external assessments. For example, they will be allowed to defer assessments until later in the academic year if it can be shown that students need more time to develop the skills required. In addition, students who are mid-way through their course will be able to carry forward their QTAGs (qualification-level vocational TAGs) from this year and will not be required to sit an exam or other external assessment in 2022. However, no change to course content will be allowed, and any adaptations to external assessments have to be agreed in advance with Ofqual and the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE).  
([https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1011780/6826\\_2\\_Decisions\\_Arrangements\\_for\\_the\\_assessment\\_and\\_awarding\\_of\\_Vocational\\_and\\_Technical\\_Qualifications\\_and\\_Other\\_General\\_Qualifications\\_in\\_2021\\_to\\_2022.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1011780/6826_2_Decisions_Arrangements_for_the_assessment_and_awarding_of_Vocational_and_Technical_Qualifications_and_Other_General_Qualifications_in_2021_to_2022.pdf))

**The position if exams cannot go ahead in 2022.**

19. Ofqual and the DfE have also published a consultation on possible contingency arrangements in the event that exams cannot take place in 2022. The consultation closed on 13th October 2021.

20. If exams are unable to take place, a Teacher Assessment Grade (TAG) process similar to the one used in 2021 is proposed. The consultation is to garner views on some proposed refinements to the TAG process. The recommendations are that:
21. Where there is a coursework element to the qualification, centres should support students to complete it.
22. Centres should plan assessment opportunities for TAGs in advance, for example, before Christmas, to protect against further disruption. They should provide students with an opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding across the whole range of content they have been taught. Centres are warned against over-assessing, with a recommendation being that they assess once per term.
23. Assessment should be useful to students and replicate exam board papers.
24. Conditions under which assessments are sat should be similar to the ones experienced during an exam season.
25. Assessments should be based on content students have been taught.
26. Assessments should not exceed the total time in actual exams.
27. Students should be aware that these assessments will be used to inform their TAGs if exams are cancelled. They can be told the content which will be tested but not the specific questions.
28. All assessments should be used to generate the TAGs, not just the assessments in which the student performs best.
29. Reasonable adjustments made for pupils taking exams should also be applied to assessments.
30. Where assessments cannot take place, centres should try to collect evidence of the equivalent breadth and authenticity.
31. Students can be provided with feedback from assessments, but teachers should not determine a student TAG and communicate this to students unless exams are cancelled.
32. Assessments should be retained by the centre, but students may have a copy.
33. In the main, other aspects of the TAG process from 2021 would be carried over into 2022 if such a process were required.

### **What consultation and engagement has taken place?**

34. Ofqual and the DfE published a consultation document on 30th September 2021 on possible contingency arrangements in the event that exams cannot take place in 2022, which primarily sought views on proposed refinements to the Teacher Assessment Grade process. This consultation closed on 13th October 2021.

### **What are the legal implications?**

35. This report has no specific legal implications.

### **What are the key risks and how are they being managed?**

36. The DfE and Ofqual have already consulted on possible contingency arrangements so school leaders will be aware of the requirements for their centres if exams cannot take place. There still remains the concern that there are high rates of Covid infection both nationally and locally. This means that learning is being interrupted by both pupil and teacher absence. This has not yet led to a closure of any secondary school or secondary year group. If this situation worsens, and exam age pupils miss large amounts of schooling, this issue will be raised with the DfE through the regular meetings which take place with the department's representatives and the local authority. It may be that members would wish to form a working group to consider the situation if this were to occur.

### **Appendices**

37. None.

### **Background papers**

38. None.