



Picture News

Advanced

13th April 2020

What's going on this week?



SATs, GCSEs and A-Level exams have all been cancelled across the UK. Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, has said "exams will not take place as planned in May and June". Pupils, whose exams were cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic, will be given grades estimated by their teachers, the government has said. Education Secretary, Mr Williamson, confirmed that assessments and examinations will not take place in the current academic year and performance tables will not be published. He added that children will receive their qualifications, "We will work with the sector and Ofqual to ensure that children get the qualifications that they need. My department is working closely with local authorities, representatives of early years schools and headteachers, regional schools, commissioners and bodies such as Ofsted and Ofqual about how to deliver this change as effectively as possible."

This week's news story: <https://bbc.in/2X3Oysa>

This week's useful video: www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/48176237



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Main question: Are tests the best way to check our learning?

Listen, think, share

- Read through this week's story and discuss the government's decision to cancel all school testing this year. Do we think this was the right decision to make? Talk about how it has impacted your summer. Were you due to sit any tests or exams that have been cancelled? How do you think this will impact (if at all) your future?
- Can you think of any alternatives to cancelling the tests the government could have made? E.g. still allowing pupils to sit tests, following social distancing protocol.
- How many reasons can you list for why we have exams? E.g. to help us access higher education, get jobs etc.
- Some people have requested for the year to be repeated if school closures continue, so young people will have the opportunity to complete the year in its entirety. Do you think this is a good suggestion? If you were given the choice, would you choose to start this school year again? List the pros and cons to this approach.
- Are you taking part in home learning activities from school at the moment? Do you think virtual or remote learning suits your style of learning? Talk about why.
- The new chairman of an exam body called Qualification Wales is looking into making young people take their GCSEs online. David Jones says the change would reflect how teenagers live their lives and how they study a bit more, he also said lots needs to be done to see how the technology would work. Do you think taking GCSEs online is a good idea? Would you prefer it or not? Why?
- Instead, for this year only, teacher assessments will replace exam grades. These teacher assessments will be based on frequent low-stakes testing, performance in the classroom and homework or coursework. This is a dramatic change, from objective standardised tests to more subjective teacher assessments. Do you think the move might be distressing for many young people and their parents?
- Read the statement below (an extract from *Teacher assessments during compulsory education are as reliable, stable and heritable as standardized test scores* by Kaili Rimfeld, Margherita Malanchini, Laurie J. Hannigan, Philip S. Dale, Rebecca Allen, Sara A. Hart and Robert Plomin.) Discuss and decide if you agree?
Teacher assessments during compulsory education are as reliable and stable as standardised exam scores. We can – and should – trust teacher assessments as indicators of pupils' achievement.
- Boris Johnson has said, regarding the pupils whose GCSE and A-Level exams have been cancelled, "We will make sure their progress will not be impeded. We will make sure they will in time get the qualifications they need." It has been reported that pupils will not sit exams but still be awarded final grades. Do you think this was a good statement to make on the matter? Do you think he should have said anything else?

Further questions for discussion

- Do you think that teacher assessment provides a fair comparison across different schools?
- Do you think exams should return next year, or do you think this is a good chance to reevaluate this process?