

A letter from Ofqual to Students re contingency arrangements for Summer 2022 exams



November 2021

Dear Student

My name is Jo Saxton and I am Ofqual's Chief Regulator. My job is to make sure that qualifications, examinations and assessments in England are properly run and are as fair as possible to all those taking them. Together these things mean you have the best chance of getting the grades you deserve and passports to the next phases of your education and life.

While the country is still responding to COVID-19, I want to make sure you know what is going to happen next with the qualifications you are working towards and how changes we're making will affect you as you come to the end of your studies.

We want to get back to normal, that means getting back to exams and other formal assessment. Exams are set, marked and graded by examiners, with everyone taking the same assessments at the same time, in the way. Other formal assessments have carefully designed and well-established marking arrangements. All this gives you the fairest chance to show what you know, understand and can do.

Arrangements for GCSEs, AS and A levels in 2022

Changes

I know that you might be concerned at the thought of taking exams next year after the disruption you have experienced. That is why we have put in place changes to exams and assessments to make them as fair as possible during the pandemic. This means that you can concentrate on what really matters p studying and revising as you prepare to get the best results you can.

The changes include advance information, designed to give you some help for revision ahead of summer exams. It will be published no later than 7 February and your school or college will let you know when this is available.

If you want to know more about these changes your teachers will be able to explain what this will mean for each of your subjects. You can also find more information on the 2022 changes to exams (<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/proposed-changes-to-the-assessment-of-gcse-as-and-a-levels-in-2022>) and changes to non-exam assessments (<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/arrangements-for-non-exam-assessment-for-qualifications-in-2022>) on our website.

Grading

When grading exams in 2022, we will aim for a grading standard that reflects a midway point between 2021 and 2019. This means that exam boards will set the grade boundaries so that more students get higher grades in 2022 than before the pandemic. This will provide a safety net for those students who might otherwise just miss out on a higher grade. We have taken this decision to reflect the disruption that you as a cohort have experienced already in your course.

Grading is monitored by the experts every step of the way, and as usual, we will review results for each subject before you get them.

Your interests are key to me – that means fairness and high-quality qualifications that will be recognized and valued: qualifications that employers, colleges and universities trust.

Contingency arrangements

Though we expect exams to go ahead as planned, if the 2022 exams cannot go ahead due to further Covid disruption, your grades will instead be determined by your teachers, using a Teacher Assessed Grade (TAG) approach. We have published our decisions about this approach following a public consultation (<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/contingency-arrangements-gcse-as-a-level-project-and-aea/outcome/decisions-on-contingency-arrangements-2022-gcse-as-a-level-project-and-aea>), which included students. This means that your teachers will gather evidence, through assessments, to help them determine Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs) if exams do not take place.

For many of you this year will be your first experience of formal exams. We don't want to add to your workload, which is why any additional assessments should help you prepare for your exams, and not create a distraction.

Your school and college will give you more information on the arrangements. We have also published guidance for your teachers (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-contingency-arrangements-for-gcses-as-and-a-levels-in-summer-2022>)

Arrangements for Vocational and Technical Qualifications (VTQs)

We also expect exams and assessments to take place for VTQs in the 2021 to 2022 academic year. Vocational and Technical Qualifications include those such as BTECs, OCR Cambridge Technicals, Functional Skills and ESOL Skills of Life, among many others.

As there is such a wide range of different vocational and technical qualifications, it isn't possible to have just one approach for them all.

We have confirmed arrangements for the assessment and awarding of VTQs and other general qualifications, such as the International Baccalaureate, for 2021 to 2022, which take account of the disruption that you may have experienced.

If you're not sure what the arrangements are for the particular qualification that you're studying towards you should speak to your school, college or awarding organization.

Additional information

If you have any questions you should speak to your teachers who will be able to support you. You, or your parents or carers, might also find it helpful to sign up for updates on our website (<https://www.gov.uk/email-signup?link=/government/organisations/ofqual>) or by following our Instagram channel @Ofqual (<https://www.instagram.com/ofqual/?hl=en>).

Good luck with your studies,

Dr Jo Saxton
Chief Regulator