

Consultation launched on 2021 exam replacement

Students who were due to sit exams this summer will receive grades determined by teachers, as part of proposals published today (Friday 15 January) to maximise fairness and help young people progress to the next stage of their education or training.

Following the cancellation of this year's summer exams, the Department for Education and Ofqual have launched [a consultation](#) seeking views on how to award grades in a way that reflects students' performance accurately, recognising the disruption they have faced this year.

Grades will be based on teacher assessment, with teachers supported in making decisions with guidance and training from exam boards.

The consultation will consider the range of evidence teachers use to award a grade, which could include coursework, other forms of assessment and papers provided by exam boards, to support consistency and fairness across schools and colleges.

The proposals ensure students are given the opportunity to demonstrate the standard at which they can perform and incentivise them to continue learning throughout the rest of the academic year.

The consultation will also seek views on results being issued to students earlier than usual to allow enough time for appeals to be processed ahead of the start of the new term.

The government has been clear that while cancelling exams was a last resort, it remains committed to ensuring that students receive a grade that reflects their hard work throughout the year and supports them to progress through their careers.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Fairness to young people has been and will continue to be fundamental to every decision we take on these issues, and I'm determined that despite all the challenges posed by this pandemic, they will not prevent students getting on with and making a success of their lives.

These proposals should give young people confidence that despite exams being cancelled, they will still receive a grade that reflects their ability. This is quite rightly an issue of great public interest and concern and it's important that those working in education alongside students, parents and employers are able to

have their say.

Interim Chief Regulator Simon Lebus said:

We know that everyone wants clarity on the way ahead quickly. Above all, we need to support students to carry on with their education for the remainder of the academic year. Students and learners will carry with them for the rest of their lives the grades they are given on the basis of these arrangements, so we must make sure they are as fair as they can be in these difficult circumstances.

The consultation asks whether externally set papers should be mandatory or optional for schools and colleges. Where they are used, they would form only one part of a teacher's wider assessment of a student.

Students should be assessed on what they have learnt, rather than against content they have not had a chance to study. There are proposals to give teachers flexibility to choose the papers they use for assessment based on the areas of the curriculum their students have covered.

Teachers' assessments would be subject to quality assurance checks by exam boards.

A range of options for private candidates to be assessed and make sure they receive a grade are also part of considerations.

[Similar alternative arrangements are proposed](#) for students taking vocational and technical qualifications, such as BTECs and Cambridge Technicals, to ensure students are treated fairly and are equally able to progress. For qualifications where a practical demonstration of skills is needed, assessments would continue to be able to take place.

The consultation builds on of months of joint contingency planning between the Department and Ofqual and sets out the government's position in making sure young people receive a grade that reflects their ability and lets them progress.

During this period of national lockdown strengthened remote education expectations are in place, with schools expected to provide a set number of hours of high-quality remote education for pupils. Schools, colleges and young people are supported by deliveries of laptops and tablets for those who need them most, with the Government now providing 1.3 million devices, and work to make sure families have the mobile and internet data they need to access key education sites.

Vocational qualifications with written exams scheduled in February and March, will not go ahead as planned, alternative arrangements will be put in place.