

Exams next year

The Secretary of State for Education has set out the position for 2021:

Arrangements for exams and assessments in 2021

I am writing following the announcement setting out arrangements for exams and assessments in summer 2021. I believe every student must have the opportunity to demonstrate their learning, gain the qualifications they deserve, and progress to the next stage of their lives.

We acknowledge that students due to sit exams next summer have experienced considerable disruption to their education, and it is right that we give them, and their teachers, more time to prepare.

We have worked with the sector, Ofqual and exam boards to agree that most summer exams and assessments will start three weeks later than planned, without delaying students from progressing to their next stage of education or training. In addition to changes to the content of assessments for certain subjects set by Ofqual, this will give pupils extra time to prepare. These changes primarily relate to England, as well as students elsewhere who undertake exams offered by boards operating in England with qualifications regulated by Ofqual.

We recognise that a shorter exam window, when combined with the risk of self-isolation, may mean that some students miss exams. To mitigate this I have announced that one maths and one English GCSE paper will take place before the May half term. This will ensure there is sufficient time between papers, allowing Year 11 pupils who need to self-isolate to sit at least one paper in these core subjects.

To ensure students can begin the following academic year as normal, results days for GCSE, AS, and A levels will take place across two days in the same week of August; AS and A levels on 24 August and GCSEs on 27 August. Students studying level 2 and 3 vocational and technical qualifications for progression will receive their results no later than these dates. We also expect that, for the majority of vocational and technical qualifications taken alongside or instead of GCSE, AS and A level exams, awarding organisations will look to align timetables with 2021 exams.

Additional support for lost teaching time

These arrangements are backed up by significant support to help students make up for lost teaching time. We have previously announced a catch-up package worth £1bn, including a 'Catch-Up Premium' worth £650m. Our expectation is that this funding will be spent on additional support to help children and young people catch up after a period of disruption

We also announced a new £350m National Tutoring Programme which will increase access to high-quality tuition for disadvantaged and vulnerable students, helping to accelerate their academic progress and tackling the attainment gap between them and their peers. In addition, the 16-19 Tuition Fund provides up to £96m for small group tutoring for disadvantaged students in sixth forms, colleges and all other 16-19 providers.

Our continued commitment to exams in uncertain times

We are working closely with Ofqual over the coming weeks to engage with

teaching unions, exam boards and other stakeholders to develop contingencies for all scenarios that may impede students from sitting their exams fairly. The Contain Framework includes expectations for how local lockdowns will affect education, including a statement that schools and colleges are to remain open. This government continues to make the education of children a priority, building on the remarkable efforts of teachers, students and parents across the country in keeping children in school – and in learning – through these challenging times.