

Qualifications for the class of 2021

Yesterday I raised in the Commons some questions about how exams should be set and marked and how standards of our main educational qualifications should be upheld for the class of 2020.

Ofqual has come up with ways of modifying the exams for next year to take into account the interruption to education experienced by pupils in some schools who did not teach a full timetable from March to September by on line means. It has also changed arrangements for field work and oral exams to respond to CV 19 social distancing rules.

As a result pupils will be offered more choice in content for the exams in History, Geography and Ancient History. In English literature pupils will be able to take three of the four blocs of work for the exam. Fieldwork in Geography and Geology will be dropped and the questions on it in the written papers. Foreign languages and English will no longer have a formal oral or spoken language requirement.

It is important next year that we get back to an exam based system. Ofqual and the Exam Boards are still considering what is best to do on dates of exams. Should they be a bit later to give schools more time to make up for lost teaching time this year? How much later can they go without jeopardising University entrance procedures?

I hope they work out a system which is fair to all students and upholds the standards established in past years. Next year they have to span the range from pupils who got a full education for the full syllabus between March and July to pupils who got very little formal education during lock down.