

Revision help for students published for summer exams

Students will have access to information from today (7 February) to help focus their revision for summer GCSE, AS and A level exams, as part of a range of adaptations to maximise fairness following the disruption to learning caused by the pandemic.

Some of the exam content, texts, topics and sub-topics, themes and skills due to be assessed have been made available for the majority of GCSE, AS and A level subjects, including maths, biology, chemistry and languages.

The additional information aims to focus students' revision without providing exact questions that will appear.

Advanced sight of the content is one part of the adaptations in place to help mitigate the impact of the pandemic on education, recognising this cohort of students were affected by school closures during periods of lockdown and disruption due to absences. Other adaptations include a choice of topics in some GCSEs like English literature and history, and support materials like formulae sheets in maths.

Exams and formal assessments will go ahead as planned this summer. More than 500,000 exam entries for vocational and technical qualifications (VTQs) successfully took place in January, giving confidence in the exams system.

Education Secretary Nadhim Zahawi said:

Exams are the best and fairest form of assessment, and we firmly intend for them to take place this summer, giving students a fair chance to show what they know.

We know students have faced challenges during the pandemic, which is why we've put fairness for them at the forefront of our plans. The information to help with their revision published today, as well as the range of other adaptations, will make sure they can do themselves justice in their exams this summer.

Ofqual Chief Regulator Dr Jo Saxton said:

Students have shown so much resilience during the pandemic and we know that they are seeking certainty. Advance information published today is one of the ways we are supporting students to have that certainty as they prepare to show what they know and can do.

We are also ensuring there is a safety-net for students with a generous approach to grading.

A common set of principles has been developed for the advance information, for example avoiding providing so much detail that answers could be pre-prepared and memorised, but the information will look different for each subject and exam board, reflecting the nature of those subjects and their assessments.

Students will also benefit from other adaptations to exams and the approach to grading this year to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on their education.

There will also be choices of topics or content in GCSE English literature, history, ancient history and geography, and a formulae or expanded equations sheet available in exams for GCSE maths, physics and combined science. There are also changes to the requirements for practical assessments in sciences and art and design, recognising how the pandemic will have affected students' opportunities in these subjects.

Ofqual's plan for grading being more generous recognises the challenges these students have faced. Ofqual wants to get back to normal grading but over a two-year period. This summer will be a transition year, to be fair to this year's students. Examiners will be asked to be more generous when setting grade boundaries, to provide a safety net for students who might otherwise just miss out on a higher grade.

The Government is fully committed to exams going ahead this summer, and does not expect that to change except in the very unlikely case of a public health emergency which would prevent students being able to physically sit exams. GCSE, AS and A level exams for each subject have also been spread out to maximise the opportunity for students to sit exams this year.