

# Contributing to a robust and fair system for 2021 examinations

The Social Mobility Commission is pleased to be contributing to the planning process being led by the Department for Education and the exam regulators, Ofqual, as we work together to plan next year's examinations in the light of the ongoing pandemic.

The right measures implemented in a timely way could ensure an equitable and rigorously planned system is in place for more than one million students in the UK who will be taking GCSEs, A levels and BTECs next summer.

Most recognise that there is a widening achievement gap in the nation's schools and that the impact of coronavirus has disproportionately hit pupils in areas of deprivation.

To support students from lower socio-economic groups, the Social Mobility Commission has made the following recommendations:

- Suspend school performance tables for 2021, as they fail to take account of the disproportionate learning loss experienced by students in areas of deprivation.
- Work with schools and colleges to develop a clear and consistent system for collecting centre assessed grades that can be used as a contingency measure if individual students are unable to take exams.
- Offer students the opportunity to take exams in Autumn 2021, without this being considered a 'resit'. The results would need to be made available in time for UCAS applications for 2022 entry.
- Support schools with extra resources, such as additional staff and venues, so that they can provide Covid-secure examination environments.

## **Responding to Covid-19 challenges**

Sasha Morgan, director of the Social Mobility Commission, says: "We are delighted to make an effective contribution to the debate and be part of the solution. Incorporation of our recommendations will ensure that disadvantaged students have the best possible experience next summer."

Sammy Wright, a Social Mobility commissioner and Lead for Schools and Higher Education, has prepared a detailed statement setting out our advice.

He said: "2020 has revealed much of what is problematic about our examinations and qualifications system, so we are pleased to get involved in planning practical solutions for 2021.

"We will continue to work closely with the Department for Education, Ofqual, schools, colleges, and social mobility charities to refine these concepts

over the next few months.”

### **The statement in full:**

“We recognise the hard work that teachers, school leaders and the Department for Education have done in keeping schools open in the most difficult of circumstances. We believe that public examinations should go ahead next summer as the best way of allowing students to gain recognition for their work, and to allow them to move on to the next stage of their lives. However, it is hard to overstate the extent to which Covid has widened existing gaps in achievement and educational entitlement, and as such, there need to be significant short and long-term actions to guard against the worst inequalities in the exam system.

Schools must not be ambushed at the last minute on this – they need time to adjust their teaching and their focus in ways that allow them to provide an effective education for the most vulnerable. Teachers are experienced and capable, but are under huge strain even during a normal exam season – during the pandemic every effort must be made to support them. We must also not fall into the trap of thinking that solutions that benefit all students will address the widening achievement gap. In a competitive exam system like ours, the key worry is that disadvantaged students will be outperformed by their peers whose experience of lockdown has been far smoother and more productive.

The key question the commission has considered in setting out our advice is ‘What constitutes a good outcome for the students who have been most disadvantaged this year? Are they better with weaker grades in more subjects, or better grades in the subjects they need?’ We firmly believe that if we can free up schools by taking away some of the pressure of performance tables that we think are unlikely to tell us anything useful about the system this year, then we can allow deprived students who have often suffered the most to be given tailored solutions.

In light of this, we recommend the following for schools:

- School performance tables should be suspended in 2021 because they cannot perform their proper function this academic year. They are poorly equipped to reflect or take into account variegated levels of learning loss. We also believe the performance tables create perverse incentives in the school system. Without the threat of league tables in 2021, schools can be freed to allow the students who have been most heavily impacted to focus on the key qualifications they need for progression.
- The Department for Education, and the regulatory board Ofqual, should produce a clear, simple system for collecting centre assessed grades that can be used as a contingency. The system must be rigorous, moderated, and issued in good time for staff to gather any information needed. These should then be used for students unable to sit exams, or for whom their schools have decided to focus on other key qualifications.
- In those instances, students would take formal exams in only critical subjects for their personal progression and receive a certificate of

completion where a centre assessed grade was used. This blended approach would ensure that students had covered the content, but free them up in the last stretch to focus their revision where they needed.

- Students should be allowed the option of an exam series in the autumn, as they were in 2020, without this being labelled as a 'resit', and the results should be released in time for the UCAS deadline for 2022 entry.
- Additional places for full resit years should be funded at the same rate as current 16-18 funding.
- The use of a back up exam is a sensible option, but it should be after the main series, not before.
- Mitigations in content and structure of exams benefit all candidates, and so do not address gaps between those who have struggled with remote learning due to home circumstance and those who have not. As such, while some adjustment (like the reduction in content of English Literature) may be practically necessary and useful, it should not be regarded as a solution.
- Generosity in grading for 2021 should aim for a midpoint between 2019 and 2020, but following a normal mathematical distribution, rather than replicating the anomalies of 2020.
- Schools must have access to extra venues and extra staff to invigilate those venues to enable them provide Covid-secure environments during examinations.
- Arrangements for students isolating at the time of exams have to take into account the vast difference in personal and socio-economic circumstances. Home invigilation should be avoided.

For the students progressing to university:

- Arrangements providing grants and opportunities for gap years for those with fewer familial resources should be retained.
- At the moment, some courses prejudice those who have done an extra year, and some institutions struggle to accommodate retakes of years because of funding reductions for older students – this could easily be addressed.

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## **SUSPECTED POACHERS DETAINED AFTER RURAL CRIME OPERATION IN COUNTY DURHAM**

The enforcement operation was located in the village of Escomb in Bishop Auckland, where fisheries enforcement and police officers joined forces to target rural crime and wildlife offending in County Durham.

Environment Agency officers, who were patrolling the banks of the River Wear at Escomb, identified the three males using a high powered lamp and a 1.5-metre gaff (which is a long-handled steel hook used to spear the fish).

It is thought that the men were attempting to illegally remove salmon and sea trout from the Wear that are currently spawning in the shallow waters. These fish are particularly vulnerable at this stage in their life cycle and have historically been the target of 'poachers'. Such cruel methods of capture are extremely damaging for the animals. If they manage to escape, they are very likely to die due to severe wounds.

David Shears, Senior Fisheries Enforcement Officer for the Environment Agency, said: "This joint operation with Durham Constabulary enabled us to protect local wildlife and highlights the consequences of illegal fishing. This sort of activity will not be tolerated.

"Atlantic salmon stocks are low and the River Wear is one of the country's major sea trout and salmon rivers. Not only are these fish an integral part of our environment but contribute significantly to local communities through the income generated by properly managed fisheries."

Officers were able to observe the males, and direct other Environment Agency and police officers to their location. All three were successfully detained. The gaff and lamp were seized and two of the males were released pending further investigations.

The third man was taken into custody for an unrelated matter.

PC Scott Crowhurst of Durham Constabulary, said: "We worked in partnership with Environment Agency Fisheries Enforcement Officers to quickly detain the suspects, ascertain their details, and provide support in dealing with this issue.

"Poaching and related rural crime will not be tolerated, and we will continue to work collaboratively with partner agencies to target those that engage in rural crime."

People who operate unlicensed nets or fish illegally risk prosecution, with unlimited fines and possible prison sentences available to the courts. Environment Agency officers also have the powers to seize equipment and vehicles.

Fisheries Enforcement Officers who are patrolling the North East's coasts and rivers and responding to reports of illegal fishing are abiding by the latest Coronavirus government guidance.

If you ever wish to report any incidents of illegal fishing or poaching then please contact the Environment Agency's 24-hour incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60.

[You can buy a fishing licence online](#)

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# Reduced Telephone Enquiry Line Opening Hours

News story

Reduction in phone operating times due to the ongoing impact of coronavirus (Covid-19) measures



Due to the ongoing impact of coronavirus (Covid-19) measures and to maintain a consistent service whilst protecting the welfare of our staff we are temporarily reducing our telephone enquiry service opening hours. As from the 30 November 2020 we will be open from 10am to 1pm Monday to Friday (excluding Bank Holidays). Please only call us if your enquiry is urgent.

You can of course contact us outside of these hours using the following appropriate email addresses:

For all enquiries relating to deceased person's estates  
[bvestates@governmentlegal.gov.uk](mailto:bvestates@governmentlegal.gov.uk)

For all enquiries relating to the issuing of the Treasury Solicitor's consent to administrative restoration (waiver letter) [bvwaiver@governmentlegal.gov.uk](mailto:bvwaiver@governmentlegal.gov.uk)

For all enquiries relating to the cash assets of dissolved companies  
[bvcbt@governmentlegal.gov.uk](mailto:bvcbt@governmentlegal.gov.uk)

For all enquiries relating to the non-cash assets of dissolved companies (e.g. land, shares, intellectual property, chattels)  
[bvcompanies@governmentlegal.gov.uk](mailto:bvcompanies@governmentlegal.gov.uk)

For all general enquiries about the work of the Bona Vacantia Division  
[bvinfo@governmentlegal.gov.uk](mailto:bvinfo@governmentlegal.gov.uk)

Published 27 November 2020

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# Enforcement letters to independent schools

Published 3 October 2019

Last updated 14 October 2021 [+ show all updates](#)

1. 14 October 2021

Removed 'Rabia Girls School: enforcement letter'. Added enforcement letters for: Acorn House College, TTD Gur, Rabia Girls and Boys School, Fusion College and Bnois Jerusalem Girls School.

2. 23 July 2021

Removed 'Promised Land Academy: enforcement letter'.

3. 21 May 2021

Added enforcement letters for: Homeschool, Yeshivah Ohr Torah School and Promised Land Academy.

4. 18 May 2021

Removed letters for Al-Ihsaan Community College, Beis Ruchel D'Satmar School, Oak Tree High School, Olive Tree Primary School and Park Avenue Girls' High School.

5. 19 April 2021

Removed Ampleforth College: enforcement letter.

6. 27 November 2020

Added 'Ampleforth College: enforcement letter'.

7. 3 October 2019

First published.

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## UK family of Overseas Territories come

# together on coronavirus, COP26 and the economy

The Joint Ministerial Council (JMC), which was held virtually from 23-26 November, has been a chance to celebrate the special partnership between the UK and the Overseas Territories (OTs).

UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson joined elected leaders at the JMC, and representatives from OTs and the UK held wide ranging discussions on a number of topics, including economic issues, COVID-19 response and recovery, protecting vulnerable groups and protecting the environment in both the run up to and beyond COP26.

Leaders heard from His Royal Highness, The Prince of Wales, ahead of discussions on the environment and COP26, showing the importance the UK puts on its relationship with the Overseas Territories and recognising their huge contribution to our biodiversity.

The UK outlined support for border security, prisons and criminal justice in the Overseas Territories. At the conclusion of the JMC, UK Ministers and OT Leaders agreed a joint communique which can be found [here](#).

Prime Minister Boris Johnson, speaking at the opening of the JMC earlier this week said:

The UK is absolutely committed to you, to your futures and to our partnership.

As we go forward and recover from this pandemic, we want to make sure that we build back greener and that we look after island economies that are so vulnerable to climate change.

In spite of everything, of the difficulties we are going through, we remember that we are united by deep ties of kinship and friendship and history and values. We in the UK government are going to make sure we continue to intensify that partnership.

Minister Morton, Minister responsible for Falklands and Gibraltar who chaired much of the Joint Ministerial Council, said:

Our Overseas Territories are part of the UK family. We take our responsibilities towards them extremely seriously, whether that means working with them to defend the OTs from threats, helping preserve the natural environment, or supporting OTs in times of crisis – as we have with COVID-19. When we face global challenges we face them together

The UK government remains committed the partnership with the Overseas Territories, and to working together so communities flourish as modern, prosperous and strong democracies.