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Press release

Further details on exams and grades announced

Further details on arrangements for exams which have been cancelled to fight spread of coronavirus

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From:

Department for Education (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education>) and The Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP (<https://www.gov.uk/government/people/gavin-williamson>)



The exam regulator, Ofqual, and exam boards will work with teachers to provide grades to students whose exams have been cancelled this summer, following our actions to slow the spread of coronavirus.

University representatives have confirmed that they expect universities to be flexible and do all they can to support students and ensure they can progress to higher education.

This year's summer exam series, including A levels, GCSEs and other qualifications, and all primary assessments, have been cancelled as we fight to stop the spread of coronavirus.

The Government's priority is now to ensure affected students can move on as planned to the next stage of their lives, including going into employment, starting university, college or sixth form courses, or an apprenticeship in the autumn.

This means ensuring GCSE, A and AS level students are awarded a grade which fairly reflects the work that they have put in. There will also be an option to sit an exam early in the next academic year for students who wish to. Ofqual will develop and set out a process that will provide a calculated grade to each student which reflects their performance as fairly as possible, and will work with the exam boards to ensure this is consistently applied for all students. The exam boards will be asking teachers, who know their students well, to submit their judgement about the grade that they believe the student would have received if exams had gone ahead.

To produce this, teachers will take into account a range of evidence and data including performance on mock exams and non-exam assessment – clear guidance on how to do this fairly and robustly will be provided to schools and colleges. The exam boards will then combine this information with other relevant data, including prior attainment, and use this information to produce a calculated grade for each student, which will be a best assessment of the work they have put in.

Ofqual and exam boards will be discussing with teachers' representatives before finalising an approach, to ensure that it is as fair as possible. More information will be provided as soon as possible.

The aim is to provide these calculated grades to students before the end of July. In terms of a permanent record, the grades will be indistinguishable from those provided in other years. We will also aim to ensure that the distribution of grades follows a similar pattern to that in other years, so that this year's students do not face a systematic disadvantage as a consequence of these extraordinary circumstances.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Cancelling exams is something no Education Secretary would ever want to do, however these are extraordinary times and this measure is a vital but unprecedented step in the country's efforts to stop the spread of coronavirus.

My priority now is to ensure no young person faces a barrier when it comes to moving onto the next stage of their lives – whether that's further or higher education, an apprenticeship or a job.

I have asked exam boards to work closely with the teachers who know their pupils best to ensure their hard work and dedication is rewarded and fairly recognised.

We recognise that some students may nevertheless feel disappointed that they haven't been able to sit their exams. If they do not believe the correct process has been followed in their case they will be able to appeal on that basis. In addition, if they do not feel their calculated grade reflects their performance, they will have the opportunity to sit an exam at the earliest reasonable opportunity, once schools are open again. Students will also have the option to sit their exams in summer 2021.

There is a very wide range of different vocational and technical qualifications as well as other academic qualifications for which students were expecting to sit exams this summer. These are offered by a large number of awarding organisations, and have differing assessment approaches – in many cases students will already have completed modules or non-exam assessment which could provide evidence to award a grade. We are encouraging these organisations to show the maximum possible flexibility and pragmatism to ensure students are not disadvantaged. Ofqual is working urgently with the sector to explore options and we will work with them to provide more details shortly.

The Government will not publish any school or college level educational performance data based on tests, assessments or exams for 2020.

DfE coronavirus helpline

Telephone 0800 046 8687

If you have a query about coronavirus (COVID-19), relating to schools and other educational establishments in England contact our helpline.

Lines are open Monday to Friday from 8am to 6pm and weekends 10am to 4pm.

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