

7 December 2020



Dear parent/carers,

2021 GCSE and A Level Summer Exams

Further to the letter I sent earlier this term, I am writing to advise you of the latest guidance that has just been published by the Department for Education (DfE).

On 12 October, the Secretary of State for education announced (and restated on 3 December) that all exams across England will go ahead in the summer of 2021. The government is clear that exams are the fairest and most accurate way to measure attainment. Most exams have been moved back 3 weeks (7 June to 2 July 2021) to create more teaching time.

The DfE have now published the measures to support students sitting exams in the summer. Students sitting exams next year will benefit from a package of exceptional measures to make them as fair as possible and manage disruption caused by COVID-19 outbreak. These new measures include:

- More generous grading than usual, in line with national outcomes from 2020, so students this year are not disadvantaged. Ofqual will aim to spread the generosity of 2020 results between subjects more evenly, so that students are not disadvantaged because of their choice of subjects.
- Students receiving advance notice of some topic areas covered in GCSE, AS and A levels to focus revision.
- Exam aids —like formula sheets—provided in some exams, giving students more confidence and reducing the amount of information they need to memorise.
- Additional exams to give students a second chance to sit a paper if the main exams or assessments are missed due to illness or self-isolation (See below).

Awarding a qualification for students who miss an exam due to COVID-19

- The DfE has worked with the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ), Ofqual and the exam boards to ensure that the timetable for the summer GCSE, AS and A level series minimises the likelihood of a candidate missing all of their exams in one subject as far as possible.
- Should a student miss some, or all, of the papers in a subject but have completed sufficient non-examined assessment (as a result of sickness or the need to self-isolate) then they can still achieve a grade through the special consideration process.
- Students who miss exams due to coronavirus (COVID-19) will be expected to provide evidence to support the process. Further information about what evidence may be required to support applications for special consideration will be available closer to the exams.



Students who miss all exams in one subject – Contingency planning

- If a student misses all GCSE or A level assessments in a subject due to sickness related to coronavirus (COVID-19), or the need to self-isolate and is unable to access the special consideration process, they will be eligible to sit a single contingency paper. This will take place between **28 June to 16 July 2021** and timetabled to allow at least a 10-day gap after each subject's final paper in the main series. Work has started on writing this timetable. **Please take careful note of these dates and avoid making any holiday plans until after 16 July 2021.**
- The DfE have stated that in most cases, they expect one contingency paper will be provided per GCSE and A level subject as well as for AS maths and further maths.
- The DfE are reviewing whether there will be contingency papers in subjects that include non-examined assessment.
- Contingency papers will be in a similar format to other papers (and similarly modified where requested), and will be produced specifically for this exam series. Ofqual and awarding organisations to consider for which VTQs or other general qualifications they might be used.

Students who miss all exams, including the contingency paper

- In the event that a student misses all of their GCSE or A level papers in a subject during both the summer series and the contingency series, with legitimate reason, and does not have the required non-examined assessed elements required to access the special considerations process, a validated teacher assessment may be used to award a grade.
- Students taking a vocational or technical qualification or other general qualification will also be able to have their qualification awarded where they have not been able to take all the assessment needed.

The DfE have developed a [parent Q&A document](#) that goes into the detail of this announcement and aims to address any queries that you may have.

Should there be any further changes to the exam timetables we will of course keep up updated.

Have a lovely Christmas,

Best wishes



Mrs K Barter
Deputy Headteacher