

Sent: 18 January 2021 15:46

Subject: On behalf of Mrs Purnell: Consultation on the Awarding of Qualifications 2021

Dear Parents/Carers,

Consultations for the Awarding of Qualifications in 2021

GCSE, AS and A level

I would like to make you aware that Ofqual and the DfE have now launched their [consultation](#) seeking views on how to award GCSE, AS and A level grades in a way which accurately reflects students' performance, whilst also recognising the disruption they have faced during their course of study. This follows the government's decision to cancel this summer's examinations.

The proposals include:

- A student's qualification grade in each subject will be based on their **teachers' assessment** of the standard at which the student is performing in terms of what they know, understand and can demonstrate.
- The teacher's assessment will be reached by drawing on a range of evidence which might include:
 - results from papers provided by exam boards, but set by teachers to take account of differential learning. This will be supported by mark schemes, exemplar papers, other guidance on standardisation, and training from exam boards.
 - non-exam assessment (NEA) in subjects where it applies
 - other performance evidence such as formal tests, mock exam results and any substantial work completed by students
- Exam boards will undertake checks to make sure that schools' approaches are appropriate
- All students can appeal if they don't believe their grade accurately reflects the evidence of the standard at which they were performing. In the first instance this would be to the school.

In terms of **timing**, the DfE and Ofqual are proposing that:

- students are assessed by their teachers in a period beginning in May into early June, similar to when exams would have been sat
- teachers submit grades to exam boards by mid-June
- external quality assurance is carried out by exam boards throughout June
- results are issued to students after the quality assurance, most likely in early July
- student appeals could be submitted immediately following the issue of results and would first be considered by schools and colleges

There are too many questions within the consultation to list them all, but the following are particularly significant:

1. To what extent do you agree/disagree that teachers should be able to use evidence of the standard performance throughout their course?

2. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the exam boards should provide a set of papers to support teachers in assessing their students' work? Should the sitting of these assessments be compulsory?
3. To what extent do you agree or disagree that if teachers use exam board papers they should have a choice about the topics covered in the questions their students answer, for example through choice of which papers they use with their students from the set of papers provided?
4. To what extent do you agree or disagree that teachers should mark any papers their students are asked to complete?
5. To what extent do you agree or disagree that teachers should be able to take into account other performance evidence for students?

Vocational, Technical and Other General Qualifications

At the same time, a consultation has also been launched for [Vocational and Technical qualifications \(VTQs\) and other general qualifications](#); these include BTEC qualifications, Cambridge Nationals, Core Maths and Functional Skills. This follows confirmation from Ofqual that exams for vocational and technical qualifications, **scheduled for February and March, have now been cancelled.**

A summary of the proposals for VTQs and general qualifications is as follows:

- External written exams for VTQs should be subject to similar arrangements as proposed for GCSE, AS and A Level
- 'On-demand' assessments of shorter, focused qualifications such as Functional Skills that can be delivered within public health guidelines should be permitted to continue, including remotely if necessary
- Internal assessment should continue to go ahead remotely, where relevant, for all learners where possible
- Where internal assessment has already been completed by learners, this is to be considered when assessing performance

Key questions include:

- To what extent do you agree/disagree with the proposal to permit awards to be made when not all internal assessments have been completed?
- Should other general qualifications such as Core Maths (this affects some year 12 students only at IGS) be included under the measures proposed for GCSE, AS and A levels or under alternative arrangements for VTQs?
- For learners who have sat assessments in January, are there any particular factors that would need to be considered to ensure fairness?

Consultation Timescales

Through their joint consultations, Ofqual and the Department for Education want to hear the views of students who were due to take their exams, their parents and carers, their teachers, school leaders and others who have an interest in this year's alternative arrangements, including employers and higher education providers.

Both consultations will close at 11.45pm on 29 January 2021.

For GCSE, AS and A level, you can respond online [here](#).

For vocational, technical and other general qualifications you can respond online [here](#).

NB: You will be asked if you have read the consultation documents first before you proceed with answering the questions.

There are no proposals to implement a statistical calculation to control the proportion of awards made at each grade, within each centre or at national level. It is also worth noting that the consultation states:

“We do not believe that teachers should be asked to decide the grade a student might have achieved had the pandemic not occurred. That would put them in an impossible position, as they would be required to imagine a situation that had not happened.”

Although these are all currently proposals, with final decisions made and published in due course, our advice to students still stands: they should continue to engage positively with the planned curriculum, complete all work set to the best of their ability and any assessment tasks set remotely should continue to be seen as an opportunity to practise application of their knowledge, understanding and skills and receive feedback on their strengths and areas for development. Ultimately, this approach will help them prepare for any future assessment tasks in school, whether these are set externally or created by departments.

Kind regards,

Carly Purnell

Headteacher