



19 October 2021

Dear Parents/Carers and Students in Years 11 and 13

Adaptations to GCSE, A level and VTQ examinations - 2022

You will be aware that, because of the impact of the pandemic, in 2020 and 2021 GCSEs, A levels and Vocational Qualifications were awarded through school based and teacher assessments and there were no national examinations.

The government has confirmed its policy decision that, in 2022, examinations should go ahead as planned but there will be 'adaptations' to recognise the disruption to students' learning.

The information below outlines the planned changes across different subject areas and different levels. Heads of department and individual subject teachers will explain in more detail to students how this affects their classes and how these changes will be built into planned work over the next year.

The government has recognised that in a pandemic, things may not always run as planned and has therefore confirmed the 'contingency arrangements' if exams cannot go ahead nationally. If exams are cancelled, it has been confirmed that grades would then be determined through teacher assessment. The DfE is currently working on the results of a consultation on what this teacher assessment process should look like. Please remember, though, this is not the government's preferred approach and they are firmly committed to exams going ahead, if at all possible.

We understand the uncertainty surrounding examination plans may have been unsettling, but as a school, we are committed to ensuring our students are as well prepared as possible for their GCSEs, A levels and Vocational qualifications, whatever the planned changes.

We'd like to reassure you that teachers have already carefully planned adaptations to the course content as well as additional intervention and revision activities to provide targeted support to students.

Therefore, it is essential that students due to take exams next year, continue to work hard and discuss any challenges with us so that we can help them be as well prepared for these adapted assessments next year as possible.

Yours sincerely

James Shapland
Headteacher

Adaptations to GCSE, A level and VTQ examinations - 2022

What changes are planned for next year's exams?

- Exams and assessments for GCSEs, A levels and Vocational qualifications will go ahead in 2022.
- There will be adaptations and adjustments to recognise the disruption experienced by the 2022 cohort.
- In GCSE English literature, history and geography there will be optional (reduced) topics and content. For our students, this means that in English Literature students will no longer be assessed on the poetry anthology, although they will still be assessed on unseen poetry. In Geography, students will no longer be assessed on 'The Challenge of Resource Management' and no longer need to study this unit. Compulsory fieldwork has also been removed. In History, students will no longer be examined on the topic of 'Henry VIII and His Ministers.'
- In GCSE Science, schools will be allowed to deliver practical work by demonstration, although hands-on practical activities are encouraged wherever possible.
- In A level biology, chemistry, physics, schools will be allowed to assess the minimum number of practical activities required.
- In GCSE mathematics, students will be given a formulae sheet in summer 2022. Exam boards will provide copies of the formulae sheet for use in teaching and to ensure that students are familiar with it prior to the exams. Clean copies of the formulae sheet will be provided in the exams.
- In GCSE physics and combined science, students will be given a revised equation sheet for covering all the equations required in the subject content. Exam boards will provide copies of the equation sheet for use in teaching and to ensure that students are familiar with it prior to the exams. Clean copies of the equation sheet will be provided in the exams.
- In GCSE, AS and A level art and design students will be assessed on their portfolio only.
- In almost all GCSE, AS and A level subjects, exam boards will provide advance information about the focus of the content of the exams subjects for the summer 2022 exams. (This will *not* include GCSE English literature, history, ancient history and geography – where there is reduced content)
- This 'advanced notice of content will be released by February 7th to enable teachers to plan to adapt their teaching in the second half of the spring term if necessary and to help students to focus their revision time.
- In addition, the grading standard will be adapted in summer 2022 with grade boundaries to be set reflecting a midway point between 2021 and 2019 – so that more students get higher grades in 2022 than before the pandemic. It is expected that this approach will provide a safety net for those students who might otherwise just miss out on a higher grade.
- Exam boards have been asked ensure that when scheduling the exam timetable, there is at least a 10 day gap between exams in the same subject to reduce the risk of students missing all exams in a subject.
- Exam boards have been told that 'special consideration should apply for students who *unavoidably* miss one or more exams in a subject. This means students will be able to achieve a grade through the special consideration process, so long as they have completed the assessment for at least one component of the qualification.
- Results for exams next year will return to their normal format, with AS and A levels being released on 18 August, and GCSEs on 25 August.

What changes are planned to Non Exam Assessment (NEA) and fieldwork?

The adjustments to NEA and fieldwork had previously been confirmed. Subject teachers will explain in more detail how this affects their classes and how these changes will be built into the work over the next year.

These adjustments accommodate public health restrictions in dance, design and technology, drama (and theatre), film studies, food preparation and nutrition, media studies, music, music technology, and physical education (PE).

In addition:

- In geography, fieldwork activities may not have been possible and at GCSE the exam boards will not ask questions in written examinations about fieldwork that students have undertaken themselves.
- For A level, the non-exam assessment will be retained but exam boards have been directed to be flexible in their requirements for students to use primary data.
- In GCSE English language, schools will not have to submit an audio-visual recording of a sample of students undertaking their spoken language assessments, although they may choose to record.
- In GCSE modern foreign languages, Teachers and students should prepare for spoken language in 2022 to be assessed in the normal way, through formal speaking tests, but exam boards will not have to include vocabulary that is not on the vocabulary lists for assessments in GCSE modern foreign languages (MFL).

What happens if public health concerns mean that exams have to be cancelled again?

The government has been clear it wants exams to go ahead, but understands there may be a situation where this cannot happen.

If exams are cancelled, it has been confirmed that grades would then be determined through teacher assessment. The DfE has been consulting on what this teacher assessment process should look like, particularly:

- the type, volume and timing of the production of the evidence used to inform teacher assessment
- the support given by the exam boards to teachers determining teacher assessed grades
- quality assurance within schools and colleges and external quality assurance by the exam boards

Please remember, though, this is not the government's preferred approach and they are firmly committed to exams going ahead if at all possible.