

January 2023

Dear Parents / Carers

Arrangements for GCSE, AS and A level exams and assessments in 2023

As last year, students will be given formulae and equation sheets in GCSE mathematics, physics, and combined science exams.

From 2023 onwards, GCSE modern foreign languages exams do not have to test unfamiliar vocabulary. Exams may still contain unfamiliar vocabulary, but exam boards can give meanings for words that are not on their vocabulary lists, if they think this is appropriate for the task and intended level of challenge.

Exam boards have recently published their exam timetables for summer 2023. You will see that there remains a greater gap between exams in the same subject than was the case pre-pandemic. This is to help students' revision between papers and create additional time for teaching and revision or support from you.

Exam boards have also included contingency sessions on the afternoons of 8 and 15 June, and on 28 June. These days would be used in the unlikely event that exams had to be moved because they could not take place when planned. Please make sure your students know that they might be required to sit exams on these days.

Grading for GCSE, AS and A levels in 2023

In 2023, the return to pre-pandemic grading will be the next step in moving towards normality.

However, we recognise that the 2023 cohort still deserves some protection against the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. We are, therefore, putting in place the same protection given to the first cohorts of students taking reformed GCSEs and A levels from 2017 onwards.

Broadly speaking this means that a typical student who would have achieved, for example, an A grade in A level geography before the pandemic will be just as likely to get an A next summer, even if their performance in the assessments is a little weaker in 2023 than it would have been before the pandemic.

We expect that overall results in 2023 will be much closer to pre-pandemic years than results since 2020. That means results in 2023 will be lower than in 2022.

I also want to take this opportunity to stress that there is no pre-determined 'quota' of grades. Nor does our country's grading system require that any students fail. Grade boundaries are not set until after students have taken exams and marking is complete, so that it is fair to students if papers are harder or easier from year to year.

Predictions for UCAS

I know that many teachers are currently predicting grades for their students to use for UCAS applications. Teachers should use the familiar pre-pandemic standard as the basis for these predictions.

Many of you will be using mock exam results to inform those predicted grades. Please bear in mind that there were different approaches to grading in autumn 2020 and 2021 and summer 2022, so using the published grade boundaries for those papers could mean predicted grades are higher than is likely in 2023. Please do be cautious when using 2020, 2021 or 2022 grade boundaries to provide an indicative grade for students.

Resilience arrangements for GCSE, AS, A level, AEA and Project qualifications

[Ofqual has recently published guidance for schools and colleges](#) on how to gather evidence of student performance to build resilience in the exam system. We have made changes this year to reduce the burden on schools, colleges and students compared to last year. It is important that you read this revised guidance carefully and make sure that you have appropriate arrangements in place.

As far as possible, you should use your existing assessment arrangements, such as mock exams, to avoid over-assessment of students. Assessments should support students in their preparation for exams in the summer term.

Vocational and Technical Qualifications

For vocational and technical qualifications (VTQs) taken in schools and colleges, alongside or instead of GCSEs and A levels, there will be a return to normal standards.

As you may know we are investigating late results in 2022. We will imminently publish the measures we propose to take to make sure students get results when they need them for progression.

We understand the additional pressures associated with delivery of the winter series for some vocational and technical qualifications this year for both students and centres. Ofqual recently published a [guide on supporting students to navigate their education](#) which considers the messaging around exams and assessments.

Thank you again for all the hard work that you have done, and continue to do, to support the successful running of exams and assessments.

Best wishes,

Dr Jo Saxton, PhD
Chief Regulator Ofqual