

Awarding for GCSE, AS and A Level Qualifications Summer 2020

Student, Teacher and Parent Information

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On 19 March 2020, the Minister of Education, Peter Weir MLA, announced that the Summer 2020 examination series would be cancelled to help fight the spread of the COVID-19 virus and that grades would be based on a range of evidence and data, including prior attainment and centre estimated grades.

This unprecedented change to examinations has required us to adapt the way grades will be awarded. Following consultation by the Department of Education with representatives of the teaching profession, CCEA has received instruction from the Minister of Education about how to proceed.

We appreciate that the announcement to cancel exams this summer will have been unsettling for students, teachers and parents. We thank you all for your patience as we address the complex issues.

What happens if one or more of my GCSE, AS and A level qualifications is not provided by CCEA?

Northern Ireland operates an open qualifications market. This means that students can take their GCSE, AS and A level qualifications with AQA, OCR, Pearson, Eduqas (part of WJEC) and CCEA.

Ofqual and Qualifications Wales have published student, teacher and parent guidance on how GCSEs, AS and A levels will be awarded in Summer 2020. If you are entered for a GCSE, AS or A level qualification with AQA, Pearson, OCR or Eduqas (WJEC), you should refer to the relevant student, teacher or parent guidance, which may differ from this information.

The links to the guidance and other communications from Ofqual and Qualifications Wales are below.

Ofqual:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/awarding-qualifications-in-summer-2020>

Qualifications Wales:

<https://www.qualificationswales.org/english/coronavirus---covid-19/information-for-centres>

How will awarding take place?

We do not anticipate the need for an additional examination series. We are currently working on the assumption that CCEA will operate its normal examination timetable for November 2020, January 2021, March 2021 and Summer 2021.

How will A levels be awarded?

For A level, we anticipate that a calculated grade, which uses statistical predictions based on previous student performance combined with centre assessed grades and centre rank orders, will provide a reliable grade outcome. Students will not be required to take A level examinations through an additional sitting, such as an autumn series. If they wish, they may sit examinations as part of the Summer 2021 examination timetable.

How will AS be awarded?

AS qualifications are not only stand-alone qualifications but also contribute to A level qualifications – AS units are usually taken in Year 13 and A2 units in Year 14. Because of the contribution that AS outcomes make towards A level results, it has been important for us to fully consider the implications for A level qualifications in Summer 2021. Students who were due to sit their AS exams in 2020 will not be required to take those exams through an additional examinations timetable. Instead, they will be treated in a similar way to those taking A levels.

All AS students will receive an AS grade and there will be no AS exams until Summer 2021. The grade awarded will be based on a range of evidence. Awarding organisations are working towards the model on which grades will be awarded and in which centre assessed grades and centre rank orders will be used. The nature of the AS grade awarded in 2020 will not allow it to contribute to A level results in 2021.

In Summer 2021, students will have two options for their A level award. If a student chooses to only sit the required A2 units, then their AS outcomes will be calculated using statistical predictions based on their performance in the A2 units. If they choose to sit any AS units, alongside the A2 units, they will be awarded the highest grade at A level from either route.

How will GCSE be awarded?

Students who were due to sit GCSE exams that would have led to a whole GCSE qualification this summer will be issued a grade using a combination of average centre performance, centre assessed grades and rank ordering.

Students who were due to sit units that will lead to GCSE grades next summer will not receive a unit result. For those students, there will be two options. They can choose to sit only the units they planned to take in 2021, and the unit(s) they entered for in Summer 2020 will have a mark calculated using statistical predictions based on their performance in 2021 units. As a result, an overall grade will be awarded. Or, students can choose to sit all the units in Summer 2021. Whichever option a student chooses, they will be awarded the highest grade.

For GCSE students, there will be no additional examinations timetable above the already agreed November 2020, January 2021, March 2021 and Summer 2021 timetables provided by CCEA. This means that students who are dissatisfied with their grade outcomes provided by calculated grades will be able to sit some GCSEs in November, January and March. The remainder of components will be offered in Summer 2021.

The timetable for November 2020 will include:

Double Award Science (DAS) units in Biology, Chemistry and Physics
Single Award Science (SAS) units in Biology, Chemistry and Physics

The timetable for January 2021 will include:

GCSE Mathematics (All units, 1–8)
GCSE English Language (Unit 1 and 4)

The timetable for March 2021 will include:

Double Award Science (DAS) units in Biology, Chemistry and Physics
Single Award Science (SAS) units in Biology, Chemistry and Physics.

Summer 2021 will include all GCSE, AS and A level units as timetabled.

What are centre assessed grades and rank ordering?

For every GCSE, AS and A level subject, CCEA will require each school, college or other exam centre to submit the following information:

- a **centre assessment grade** for each student – this professional judgement is derived from evidence held within the centre (school or college) and which has been reviewed by subject teachers and relevant heads of department; and
- the **rank order** of students within each grade – for example, for all those students with a grade C in GCSE Mathematics, or a grade B in A level Biology, a rank order where 1 is the most secure/highest attaining student, and so on.

We will be issuing guidance to schools and colleges on how we will collect this information. We will use this information and other information to provide a grade.

Teachers and heads of department will have a good understanding of their students' performance and how they compare to other students within the subject for this and previous years. We believe this approach is in the best interests of students. In coming to this holistic judgement, centres will assume that it is no easier or harder for a student to achieve a particular grade this year compared to previous years.

Teachers should draw on all existing records and available evidence (as far as possible in the context of current public health advice).

Where students have agreed reasonable adjustments or access arrangements (for example a reader or scribe), the judgement should take account of likely achievement with the reasonable adjustment/access arrangement in place.

Special consideration requests, if a student is unable to take an assessment or suffers a traumatic event that might affect their performance, will not apply this summer. Instead, judgements should reflect how students would have performed under ordinary circumstances.

When will I get my results?

We're working hard to make sure you get results as soon as possible and no later than the published dates of 13 August (AS and A level) and 20 August (GCSE). We will confirm dates as soon as we can.

What do students need to do?

You do not need to do anything. Your teachers will review all the work you have done so far; any new work set will not influence this summer's results. Teachers may continue to set work to ensure that all teaching and learning has been completed and help prepare you for next year.

There is **no requirement** for students to complete additional mock exams or homework tasks for determining a centre assessment grade, and no student should be disadvantaged if they are unable to complete any work set after schools/colleges and other exam centres were closed.

CCEA intends to carry out a process, being developed with CCEA Regulation, to statistically standardise the grades. For this to be as fair as possible, we will ask schools and college to rank order students and to be as accurate as possible when doing this.

In doing this, teachers should draw on examples of student work, including any units completed in a previous series, coursework or other qualification assessments where available.

We will continue to work with technical and statistical experts to develop a statistical model to standardise grades in each subject, which will combine a range of evidence, including:

- expected grade distributions at full CCEA cohort level;
- results in previous two years, where available, at individual centres; and
- the prior attainment profile of students at centre level.

We will apply the statistical standardisation to align the judgements across and within centres, so that, as far as possible, no one is unfairly advantaged or disadvantaged this summer.

What happens if I am a private candidate?

Private candidates are students who have not been taught in the centre because they might be home-schooled or be following distance-learning programmes or studying independently.

Where centres have accepted entries from private candidates, those students should be included where the Head of Centre is confident that they and their staff have seen sufficient evidence of the student's achievement to make an objective judgement.

We are urgently exploring whether there are alternative options for those students who do not have an existing relationship with a centre and who need results this summer for progression purposes.

Can I access my centre assessed grade or rank order position?

Schools and colleges can now commence the work to generate centre assessed grades and rank orders.

The grades and rank order that will be provided are confidential and cannot be shared with you as students, your parents or carers. Please don't ask your teachers, or anyone else at your centre, to tell you the grades they will be sending to exam boards or where they have placed you in the order of students. This is to help ensure the information submitted by schools and colleges is as fair as possible. During the grading process, and in advance of the issue of results, a school or college will not share the centre assessment grades nor the rank orders submitted with students, their parents/carers, or any other individuals outside the school or college. Your school or college will share this data with CCEA. It is the centre's responsibility to ensure that the data submitted to CCEA as part of this process is correct.

How can I appeal my grade awarded?

Under the circumstances, the normal arrangements for reviews of marking and appeals will not apply.

We are considering what arrangements might be put in place to allow an effective appeal.

Are there additional examination opportunities?

Students who feel that their grades from this summer do not reflect their performance will be able to sit examinations at the next available opportunity. If they choose to do this, the higher grade stands.

How will CCEA treat malpractice allegations?

CCEA will investigate any allegations of acts which are intended to give an unfair advantage in the awarding process or undermine the processes described. The consequences of malpractice remain the same as in previous years.

Further Advice and Information

Further advice and information is available through <https://ccea.org.uk> – follow the links for CCEA COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions.

