

16th December 2022

Dear Parents/Guardians

I am writing following the publication by Ofqual and the Department for Education (DfE) of their response to consultations on qualifications in 2023 (click [here](#)). This included consultation on: adaptations to GCSE maths, physics and combined science in 2023; permanent changes to GCSE languages assessments; and the contingency plans should examinations be unable to take place in summer 2023.

Contingency should examinations be cancelled

The clear message from Ofqual and the DfE is that examinations are expected to take place in 2023. I am writing purely for contingency reasons and I would like to reassure parents/guardians that there is currently no reason to think that examinations will not go ahead as planned. Any changes would be due to a national emergency, such as the lockdowns due to the COVID pandemic, and would be made at a national level, as was the case with the cancellation of all examinations in 2020 and 2021, and not at a school or individual student level.

However, Ofqual and the DfE has asked schools to make contingency arrangements should examinations be cancelled in 2023. Schools are being asked to conduct one round of assessments for candidates for this purpose. These assessments should be completed in examination conditions, and we intend to use the pre-public examinations (PPEs) for this purpose.

The guidance states that, where possible, students should be informed in advance that these assessments will be used as a contingency should examinations be cancelled, and that students in a cohort should be assessed at the same time, or different assessment materials should be used. This information has been announced after the Year 10 Citizenship and Year 11 PPE season, and therefore has not been the case for students in Years 10 and 11. However, I can confirm that PPEs will be used as contingency should examinations be cancelled, and that Year 13 students who are absent for any PPEs will sit a different assessment from the rest of the cohort when they return to school.

Finally, all PPEs will be retained by the school. Teachers will be able to give students back their PPEs during lessons to allow for feedback to be shared, but students will not be able to keep their PPEs.

Grading in 2023

Ofqual and the DfE have confirmed that grading in 2023 will return to 2019 levels but will not be lower than in 2019. This means that students have the same chance of gaining each grade in 2023 as in 2019. This approach is replicated in vocational qualifications.

I can confirm that all PPEs will be marked using published mark schemes from the awarding bodies, and graded using 2019 grade boundaries, as per the advice from Ofqual.

Advanced/optional information

There will be no optionality or advanced information as occurred in 2022. Students will be taught all course content and any topic could come up in examinations.

There will be support in the form of formula sheets in GCSE maths, combined science and physics. These have not yet been published but are expected to look similar to those used in 2022, which Year 11 students have used in the recent pre-public examinations (PPEs).

Exam timetable - summer 2023

In 2022, the summer series examination timetable reflected the ten-day isolation period for COVID-19. Whilst this is no longer applicable, the proposed timetable for the summer 2023 examination series does include a gap of around seven days between the first and last paper in most qualifications.

The contingency days have been set for 8th, 15th and 28th June 2023. These contingency days are designed to be used in the event of national or significant local disruption to examinations and students must ensure they are available on those days if required.

GCSE languages

The changes made to GCSE MFL examinations, removing the requirement for awarding bodies to assess candidates on unfamiliar vocabulary, will continue until further notice.

Finally, I recognise there is a great deal of information contained in this letter and I would again like to reassure parents/guardians that examinations are intended to go ahead as planned in 2023, and that much of the information is for contingency purposes. These are important qualifications and I know that teachers are preparing students thoroughly, and the best advice for students is to follow the guidance of their teachers. Should parents/guardians or students have any questions or concerns please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



Gareth Davies
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