

This guide provides you with information about this year's arrangements for qualifications regulated by Ofqual. It also explains what support is in place when taking exams and assessments.

[Ofqual](#) regulates around 230 awarding organisations to develop, deliver and award qualifications in England. This means we set rules that awarding organisations must follow. We focus on making sure the qualifications system is fair, so that students, parents, teachers and others can be confident in results.

Ofqual is responsible for making sure that qualifications and assessments meet high standards. We monitor exam boards and awarding organisations and make sure that qualifications do what students, higher education institutions and employers need them to do.

## About this guide

This guide is for students taking any of the following qualifications:

- GCSEs
- AS or A levels
- other general qualifications, including International Baccalaureate, core mathematics and Pre-U
- Technical Qualification (part of a T Level)
- BTEC, Cambridge Technicals and other vocational and technical qualifications (VTQs) taken alongside GCSEs and A levels

In this guide, we refer to schools and colleges as a collective term for all schools, colleges and other exam centres.

Some students won't be studying at a school or college and will be private candidates. They are often home educated or are re-taking a qualification after leaving school or college. They may be studying

with a distance learning provider, tutor, parent, or without any support. Private candidates will need to register at a school, college or other exam centre to sit their exams. More information on how to do this can be found in this guide. We make clear in this guide where information only applies to a certain type of qualification. If you are not sure exactly which qualifications you are taking, check with your school or college.

This guide talks about awarding organisations and exam boards. All organisations that offer qualifications regulated by Ofqual are called awarding organisations. The 4 awarding organisations that offer GCSEs, AS and A levels in England are also called exam boards.

This guide refers to Exams Officers. An exams officer is the person in a school or college that organises exams. An exams officer's duties will vary by school or college. Check with your school or college who your exams officer is and how to contact them.

# **What you need to know before your exams**

## **Arrangements for exams and assessments**

Exams and assessments are going ahead as normal this year. This is important, to prepare you for college, university or employment in the best possible way, and help you to make choices about your future.

For some of you this will be the first time you are taking external exams and formal assessments, so you may not be familiar with what happens.

Your school or college enters you for the exams and assessments for the qualifications you are taking.

## **GCSEs, AS and A levels**

GCSEs, AS and A levels are going ahead as normal this year, with the following support.

[View an accessible version of this diagram](#)

### **Support Materials**

In GCSE maths, physics, and combined science exams, you will be given formulae and equation sheets, so there are fewer things to remember in the exams.

### **Grading protection**

Your work will be marked and graded in the normal way, as it would have been before the pandemic. Because of the disruption caused by the pandemic, examiners will be slightly lenient when setting grade boundaries.

### **Spaced-out timetable**

This year exams in each subject are spaced out. This will make it less likely you will miss all exams in a subject if you are too ill to take one of your exams. This will also help you revise and prepare between papers.

### **Help with languages**

In GCSE modern foreign languages, the exams do not have to test unfamiliar vocabulary. Exams may contain unfamiliar vocabulary, but exam boards can give meanings for words that are not on their vocabulary lists.

### **GCSE tiering**

Some GCSE subjects have 2 tiers of entry (foundation or higher). The subjects with tiers of entry are:

- maths
- combined science
- physics
- chemistry

- biology
- statistics
- modern foreign languages

Your school or college decides whether to enter you for foundation or higher tier.

Foundation tier: students may be awarded grades 5 to 1 (5-5 to 1-1 in combined science).

Higher tier: students may be awarded grades 9 to 4 (9-9 to 4-4 in combined science). Students who just miss a grade 4 (4-4 for combined science) may be awarded a grade 3 (4-3 for combined science).

If you do not get enough marks to get a grade, you will receive a 'U'.

Before your exams you should make sure you know which tier you are taking so that you can prepare for, and sit, the correct exam paper.

### **Vocational and technical qualifications**

Exams and assessments for these qualifications will go ahead as normal in 2023. If you are expecting to finish your vocational or technical qualification this year, or at some time in the future, and you did some of your exams or assessments in either of the last 2 academic years, you can use all the results you have achieved so far. This includes any grade from an adapted assessment, a teacher-assessed grade (TAG) or a centre assessment grade (CAG) between 2020 and 2022.

## **Exam timetable**

Your school or college will give you your individual exam timetable. You should check this carefully as not all exams start at the same time. If you think there are mistakes in your timetable or if you are not sure about the timing of any exams, check with your school or college. If you miss an exam because you didn't know the date or time of the exam you won't get any marks for it.

## **GCSE, AS and A level**

GCSE, AS and A level exams will be held between 15 May and 28 June 2023. Exam board timetables for the 2023 summer exam series of GCSEs, AS and A levels are available on the [JCQ website](#).

The exam timetable contains 3 contingency sessions. These sessions would be used in the unlikely event that an exam had to be moved nationally because it could not take place when planned. These sessions cannot be used to reschedule an exam that you have missed. If you miss an exam, you should speak to your school or college straight away.

Contingency sessions are on the afternoons of 8 and 15 June, and all day on 28 June. You must be available for all 3 contingency sessions even if you do not have exams scheduled on that day. If an exam has to be moved to one of these sessions, your school or college will tell you.

## **Vocational and technical qualifications**

Some awarding organisations will offer contingency sessions for vocational and technical qualifications. You should ask your school or college for any dates you need to be available. If an exam or assessment has to be cancelled and moved, then your school or college will tell you.

## **Reasonable adjustments or access arrangements**

Reasonable adjustments, often called access arrangements, are changes made to an exam or assessment, or to the way an exam or assessment is carried out so that disabled students can demonstrate what they know, understand, and can do. The exam must still test the same knowledge, skills and understanding for that qualification.

Your school or college will arrange any reasonable adjustments or access arrangements. They could include:

- extra time to complete exams or assessments
- changes to exam papers, for example, large print or Braille
- help with specific tasks, for example, another person might read questions to you or write your dictated answers

Different reasonable adjustments are available depending on the needs of individual students. If you think you need a reasonable adjustment or access arrangement it is important that you speak to your school or college about your needs as soon as possible.

Your school or college will have someone who organises these arrangements, a special educational needs and disabilities coordinator (SENCo) in schools, and a named person in colleges, who can give you more information about reasonable adjustments and whether they apply to you.

You can find more information about reasonable adjustments and access arrangements in this [JCQ Guidance](#).

## Private candidates

If you are a private candidate, you must be registered to take your exams at a school, college or other exam centre.

Not all schools and colleges offer entries for private candidates. If you are looking for somewhere to take your GCSE, AS and A level exams, you or your parents or carers can contact any school, college or other exam centre to ask whether they offer entries for private candidates. You can also use [JCQ's list](#) of all schools, colleges and other exam centres that will make exam entries for private candidates.

If you are a private candidate studying for a vocational or technical qualification, you should contact your awarding organisation. They will tell you where you may be able to take your qualification.

# What you should know during your exams and assessments

## Preparing for your exams and assessments

Speak to your teachers or exams officer before your exams and assessments to make sure you know what will happen and what you need to do. For example:

- make sure you have your personal assessment timetable and know ahead of time where and when your exams or assessments are, including when you need to arrive
- know what equipment you're allowed to take in for each exam or assessment - this includes approved calculators that are only allowed in some exams or assessments
- use a clear pencil case and, if you need a water bottle, remove the label
- don't take a mobile phone, watch or any communication device into an exam, even if it is switched off, as you could lose marks or be disqualified
- when you receive your exam paper, check it has the correct information on it for example, date, name and tier of exam
- if you are not sure about anything, raise this immediately with the exam invigilator
- listen carefully and follow all instructions given by the exam invigilator

## Special consideration

Special consideration is any adjustment given to a student, including a private candidate, who has experienced a temporary event outside of their control at the time of the exam or assessment which significantly

affects their ability to take an assessment or show what they can do in an assessment.

Special consideration is only for things that happen immediately before or during an exam or assessment that have a significant effect on a student's ability to take that exam or assessment, or on how they performed.

To be eligible for special consideration you must have been fully prepared for the assessment and have covered the whole course. You will not be eligible for special consideration because your education was disrupted, either by the pandemic or for any other reason.

There are 3 different types of special consideration:

- changes to the way assessments are taken if you have temporary injuries or illnesses, sometimes referred to as 'access arrangements'. For example, a student with a broken arm may have someone write their dictated answers
- a small number of extra marks may be awarded if your exam performance is affected by temporary illness, injury, or other unforeseen circumstance
- awarding a grade if you unavoidably missed an exam or assessment, as long as you have completed at least one other exam or assessment for that qualification

If you think you might be eligible for special consideration you should talk to your school or college.

There is further information available in the [JCQ publication: A guide to the special consideration process](#).

## **Malpractice**

Malpractice involves some form of wrongdoing. Examples include sharing answers, impersonation, leaking exam papers or other assessment materials, swapping scripts, smuggling information or taking mobile phones and communication devices into exam halls.



You must not wear a watch in the exam, as doing so will be treated as malpractice.

You may see websites or individuals offering leaked exam papers or other assessment materials. Do not look at any papers or materials offered in this way. They are probably fake, and awarding organisations investigate any attempt to breach exam paper security. If there is any evidence that you have engaged with leaked papers you could face sanctions, including disqualification.

It is important that all instances of suspected exam paper leaks are reported to Ofqual or the awarding organisation as soon as possible, so tell your teacher if you are aware of any leaks.

**Students who cheat or commit malpractice face serious sanctions, including being disqualified from the qualification.**

### **How to report suspected malpractice**

Everyone involved in delivering and taking exams and formal assessments has a role to play in preventing and reporting malpractice, including you. This is to make sure that exams are fair for all students.

All allegations of malpractice are taken extremely seriously and will be investigated.

If you see or suspect malpractice you should report it to a teacher, your exams officer, or the awarding organisation. Your school or college must investigate and report such incidents to the awarding organisation.

If you would rather not talk to your school or college, you can contact the relevant awarding organisation or [Ofqual](#).

## **What happens after you have taken your exams or assessments**

After you have taken your exam or assessment, awarding organisations will mark your work. Once the awarding organisation has marked the papers for your qualification, they will work out how many marks are needed for each grade. This is known as grading.

## Marking

Awarding organisations decide how your exam or assessment is marked. This could be paper based or online and could be marked by several different people. Markers don't usually see your name or which school or college you attend, so the marking is anonymous. Awarding organisations check markers' work at every stage to make sure it is consistent and high quality.

If your qualification includes non-exam assessment, for example practical work or a performance, this may be marked by the awarding organisation, or by your teacher according to the awarding organisation's requirements. If you have concerns about how your non-exam assessment has been marked or how your provisional grade has been worked out, please speak to your school or college.

For GCSE, AS and A level assessments marked by your teacher you are entitled to know your marks. If you do not think your mark is correct, you can ask your school or college for a review of your teacher's marking before your marks are given to the exam board. Your work will be reviewed by someone not previously involved in the marking. Speak to your school or college for information about how to do this.

Your work is then moderated by the exam board. Moderation is when teachers' marking is checked to make sure it is in line with the awarding organisation's expectations.

Awarding organisations check teachers' marking of non-exam assessments so that marking is consistent across all schools and colleges. Awarding organisations might look at a sample of work from your school or college, to check that the marking is in line with the national standard. Your work might be included in that sample.

## Grading

Your work will be marked and graded in the normal way this year, as it would have been before the pandemic. Because of the disruption caused by the pandemic, examiners will be slightly lenient when setting grade boundaries for GCSE, AS and A level. It's important that we move towards normality to set you up for college, university or employment in the best possible way, and help you to make choices about your future.

Broadly speaking, a student who would have achieved, say, a grade 7 or A grade in a GCSE or an A level before the pandemic will be just as likely to get a grade 7 or A grade in 2023, even if their performance in the assessments is a little weaker this year.

After the exam papers or assessments have been marked, senior examiners will review the papers to see the quality of student work and all the available evidence before recommending the grade boundaries – the number of marks needed to get each grade. This happens after work has been marked, so that awarding organisations can see how students have answered the questions. Grade boundaries change each year to reflect any differences in the difficulty of the question papers.

Experts at the awarding organisations will monitor grading every step of the way and, as usual, Ofqual will make sure that the awarding organisations take a suitable approach to grading. There are no set numbers of each grade available. You will be awarded a grade that reflects your performance.

For some vocational and technical qualifications, each piece of assessed work will be given a grade, and these will be combined to give your final overall grade. [T Levels will be graded generously](#) this year as they are new qualifications.

## Getting your results

The date you receive your results will depend on the qualification you are studying, the way it has been assessed, and the awarding organisation.

You will receive A level and AS results on:

Thursday 17 August 2023

If you are studying a level 3 vocational or technical qualification and are planning to use your results to go on to further or higher education, you will receive your results on or before 17 August.

You will receive GCSE results on:

Thursday 24 August 2023

If you are studying a level 2 vocational or technical qualification and are planning to use your results to go on to further or higher education, you will receive your results on or before 24 August.

Some vocational and technical qualification results will be available at different times throughout the year. You can find the date you will receive your qualification results on that qualifications' awarding organisation website.

If you have concerns about when you will receive your results or what your results are, you should speak to your school or college who will be able to help you.

## **What to do if you think there is a mistake in your results**

### **Reviews of marking and enquiries about results**

If you think there has been a mistake in the marking of your exams or assessments, you should talk to your school or college. Your school or college can ask the awarding organisation to check if there were any errors in how your exam or assessment was marked. If your school or college decides not to take forward your request for an

awarding organisation to review the marking of your work, you can ask your school or college to review that decision.

For some qualifications, including GCSEs, AS and A levels, and Technical Qualifications (part of a T Level), your school or college can also ask to see your marked assessment or exam paper. They can do this before deciding whether to ask for a review of marking, to see whether they think there was a mistake when your work was marked. The awarding organisation may charge for this.

If you are a private candidate, you can contact the awarding organisation directly to ask for your marked paper or a review of marking.

If your school or college asks for a review of marking and the awarding organisation does not find any mistakes, your mark will not change, so your grade will not change. If the awarding organisation finds a mistake, your mark could go up or down. If your mark changes, this could mean that your grade stays the same, goes up or goes down.

An awarding organisation cannot give you extra marks just because your mark was close to a grade boundary or because you did not get the grade your school or college predicted. In most years, at A Level, only around half of students achieve the grades their school predicted them. If you don't get the grade your school predicted, it does not automatically mean something has gone wrong with the marking or grading of your exam.

For GCSE, AS, A level, T Level and some vocational or technical qualifications, your school or college can also apply for a review of moderation of non-exam assessment that was marked by your teacher, if marks were changed by the awarding organisation following moderation. This review would apply to all students taking the qualification at your school or college, not just to you.

If the awarding organisation finds a mistake with the moderation, your grade could stay the same or go up, but it cannot go down. This is because the review affects many students, and schools and colleges may not be able to get permission from everyone to request the review. This review would apply to all students taking the qualification at your school or college, not just to you.

The awarding organisation may charge fees for reviews of marking or moderation if your grade does not change. There will be no fees if your grade changes following a review. Your school or college will be able to tell you about any fees that you may need to pay.

If you are not sure whether this would apply to the qualification you are taking, you should speak to your school or college.

## **Deadlines**

Awarding organisations publish details of the deadlines for seeking reviews of marking or moderation, and appeals, on their websites.

Your school or college can request a priority review of marking if you need the outcome of the review to get your higher or further education place. Awarding organisations will aim to complete priority reviews by **7 September**, which is UCAS's advisory deadline for higher education providers to hold places open for students.

If you are a private candidate, you should make your request for a priority review directly to your awarding organisation.

## **Appeals**

For all qualifications, if you and your school or college still have concerns after asking the awarding organisation to review your mark, your school or college can challenge the review decision through an appeal. The possible outcomes of an appeal are the same as for reviews of marking or moderation, explained above. Your school or college will be able to tell you about any fees you may need to pay.

Your school or college can also challenge awarding organisations' decisions about reasonable adjustments, special consideration and malpractice. If you have concerns about any of these decisions, speak to your school or college.

## **Exam procedures review service**

If your qualification is a GCSE, AS or A Level, Level 3 Project (EPQ) or Technical Qualification (part of a T Level) and your school or college thinks the review of marking or moderation and / or appeal were not completed properly, they can ask Ofqual to review the case.

This is called the exam procedures review service (EPRS). An application can only be made to EPRS after your case has been considered at the awarding organisation's final appeal stage. There is no fee for the EPRS.

The EPRS will look at whether the awarding organisation has followed its own procedures and Ofqual's rules. Ofqual will not review your work or change your grade. We can ask the awarding organisation to look at your appeal again if we think the awarding organisation has made a mistake when it completed the review of marking or moderation, or when it considered your appeal. See [guidance on the EPRS](#) for more information.

## Resilience arrangements

It is very unlikely that formal exams and assessments will be cancelled but, just in case something does happen, we have put resilience arrangements in place.

In the event that exams are cancelled nationally, your grades would be determined by your teachers, using teacher-assessed grades (TAGs) based on teachers' assessments of your work. This would only happen due to an event like the pandemic which has such severe consequences for a significant number of students. This will apply if you are studying for a GCSE, AS, A level, Project, Advanced Extension Award, or vocational or technical qualifications assessed in a similar way and used for progression to further or higher education.

Evidence of student performance would be needed for alternative assessment arrangements. Ofqual's guidance for schools, colleges and other exam centres explains [what schools and colleges should do to collect and keep evidence in the academic year 2022 to 2023](#).

Schools and colleges have been told that evidence should come from assessments that students normally take, for example, mock exams. Your teachers should tell you when you are taking assessments that could be used as evidence, but you should just approach them as you normally would.



Students should expect that exams and assessments will go ahead. Further information will be provided to schools and colleges in the unlikely event that exams cannot go ahead as planned.

## Private candidates

If you are a private candidate and have already registered to take your exams at a school, college or other exam centre, you might want that centre to assess you during the academic year, alongside the centre's students, in line with the published resilience guidance. The school or college may agree to do so, although they would need to make sure the assessments only covered content that you had studied. Alternatively, you could be assessed only if exams do not take place, in which case you would be assessed in a shorter period.

If the government considered that national exams could not take place, the Department for Education would, as it did during the pandemic, explore ways to encourage schools and colleges to work with private candidates and consider options to provide affordable opportunities for private candidates.

## Useful contacts

### Ofqual

You can find the most up to date information about the arrangements for 2023 on [Ofqual's rolling](#) update.

[Contact Ofqual](#)

Telephone: 0300 303 3344



Our phone line is normally open from 09:00 to 17:00 on weekdays – please check our website for opening times on and after results days.

If you want to complain to Ofqual about an exam board or awarding organisation, for example, because you think they have not followed their own published policies and procedures of Ofqual's rule, see our [complaints procedure](#). We would usually expect you to give the awarding organisation a chance to resolve your complaint by using their complaints process before coming to us.

## Awarding organisations and exam boards

If you have any questions about the qualifications you are taking, or about preparing for your exams and assessments, you should talk to your school or college first.

The awarding organisations that offer GCSEs, AS and A levels are often called exam boards. Exam boards develop, mark and award GCSE, AS and A level qualifications.

There are 4 exam boards delivering these qualifications in England: [AQA](#), [OCR](#), [Pearson](#) (Edexcel), and [WJEC Eduqas](#).

The contact details of all awarding organisations that deliver the wide range of qualifications that Ofqual regulates can be found on the [Ofqual Register](#).

## Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ)

[JCQ](#) is the exam boards' membership organisation (AQA, OCR, Pearson and WJEC). Exam boards use JCQ to set common policies and procedures that schools and colleges must follow.

JCQ has [published information for centres and students](#) on the 2023 arrangements.

JCQ's members also include CCEA, City and Guilds, NCFE and SQA, developing and delivering many vocational and technical qualifications in England.

Information and contact: [JCQ website](#)

## National Careers

The [National Careers Service](#) provides free and impartial careers advice, information and guidance including [T Levels and VTQs](#). The service is available to anyone aged 13+.

Telephone: 0800 100 900

Lines are open from 08:00 to 20:00 Monday to Friday and 10:00 to 17:00 on Saturdays. Calls are free from landlines and most mobile numbers.

## UCAS

[UCAS](#), the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service, is an independent charity, and the UK's shared admissions service for higher education.

For any questions about higher education application and admissions, you should contact the relevant institution directly.

Telephone: 0371 468 0 468

Lines are open Monday to Friday, 08:30 to 18:00

## Equality Advisory and Support Services (EASS)

[Equality Advisory and Support Service \(EASS\)](#) advises and assists individuals on issues relating to equality and human rights, across England, Scotland and Wales.

Telephone: 0808 800 0082

Textphone: 0808 800 0084

## **Mental health support**

Always make sure you speak to somebody if you are feeling anxious or struggling with your mental health. This might be a parent, carer or someone else you trust.

You may find it helpful to read our [resources on preparing for exams](#) – including Ofqual’s [guide to coping with exam pressure](#).

## **Other organisations**

[Childline](#) is a service provided by the NSPCC offering confidential support and advice to children and young people.

[Mind](#) is a charity providing mental health support for anyone experiencing a mental health problem.

[Young Minds](#) is a charity working to improve emotional well-being and mental health amongst children and young people.

[Children and young people’s mental health services \(CYPMHS\)](#) are services that work with children and young people who have difficulties with their mental health or wellbeing.

## **Infographic: accessible version**

The image shows a line of four jigsaw pieces coloured blue, red, orange and green. Each individual jigsaw contains some text on one of the following four subjects:

## **Support materials**

Students will get formulae and equation sheets in some GCSEs and won't have to memorise as much.

## **Grading protection**

Protection in place for GCSE and A level student cohorts

## **Spaced-out timetable**

Exam papers in the same subject well-spaced out in the timetable