



## GCSE & A-level with Ofqual Q&A

*How likely is it that support sheets for Maths, Physics and Combined Science will be available in future years?*

The Department for Education (DfE) announced that, in 2023, students are not required to memorise formulae for GCSE mathematics and equations for GCSE physics and combined science. This reflects their responsibility for GCSE subject content, and was a change that was also made for exams that took place in 2022 due to the disruption experienced by those year groups as a result of the pandemic.

A consultation was published seeking views on the proposals to continue to require exam boards to provide formulae and revised equations sheets for GCSE mathematics, physics and combined science exams in 2023 only.

Whether formulae and equation sheets are available in future year would be a decision for the DfE in line with their subject content.

*How can parents help children who are very stressed even if they are succeeding?*

Ofqual's student guide, [Coping with exam pressure - a guide for students](#), has been produced in conjunction with Professor Dave Putwain, a researcher (and a former school and college teacher) at Liverpool John Moores University. This guide has advice and guidance for your child in preparing for their exams and assessments. We also signpost further resources to support students and their parents [here](#).

*Do schools share predicted grades with the exam board?*

No, predicted grades are not shared with exam boards.

*Does it matter which board exam the child is sitting for and which board is the best*

The Department for Education is responsible for setting the subject content for GCSEs, AS and A levels. Exam boards can choose to offer a qualification in a subject based on the subject content set by the Department for Education. In addition, each GCSE, AS and A level specification offered by an exam board must comply with Ofqual's qualification and subject level conditions for all GCSE, AS and A level qualifications. This includes the assessment objectives set by Ofqual, which detail the skills that must be assessed for each subject and the proportion of marks that must be available for each. The use of statistical predictions is important to support alignment between exam boards in a subject, so that it is no easier to get a grade in a particular subject with one exam board than another.

Your child's school or college will choose which exam board their students will sit their exams and assessments with. Please speak to your child's school or college for information about which specification they have chosen to deliver for each subject.

*how does Grade protection work in practice?*



We are expecting results in 2023 to be similar to those in pre-pandemic years. The grading protection that we have introduced for GCSE and A level students means that a typical student who would have achieved a particular grade before the pandemic should be just as likely to do so in 2023, even if the quality of their work is a little weaker.

*Is private tutoring better?*

You should speak to your child's school or college to understand the support your child requires.

*Are the Exam board, writing the same GCSE question?*

No, exam boards are responsible for setting their own questions. Although all exam boards specifications are based on the same subject content set by the Department for Education.

*Does it matter if a student sits an A level subject at a different centre, even if the student is registered at a school?*

As a private candidate, a student can register to sit an exam at another exam centre. You should speak to your child's school as they may have a policy of making entries for students in additional subject to the ones they have studied in school.

Ofqual does not regulate exam centres (schools and colleges). Therefore, we cannot require or direct centres to make entries for students, including for private candidates.

If you would like to find an alternative centre in your area that may offer entry, the Joint Council for Qualifications (the exam boards' representative body) has a list of centres accepting private candidates for this summer's exam series: [Private Candidates - JCQ Joint Council for Qualifications](#).

*How what are the main differences between the English system and the Scottish system? Is it the same grading system?*

Education is a devolved matter in the United Kingdom, meaning that there is a different system in each of the nations in the UK. You can find out further information about qualifications in Scotland on [SQA's website](#).

*Can gcse in a particular subject be sat again if desired grades are not achieved?*

*Can you provide more information on the resit for the examinations and the provisions available for such?*

Exams are available for GCSE English language and mathematics only in November, and only students who were aged 16 or above on 31 August of that year can enter. For all other GCSEs, they can be resit the following summer.

Your child's school or college will decide whether they allow re-sits for a qualification. Exam boards do not specify a minimum grade for re-sits.

If your child's school or college will not allow you to re-sit a qualification, you may need to look for an alternative centre. If you would like to find an alternative centre in your area that may offer entry, the Joint Council for Qualifications (the exam boards' representative body) has a list of



centres accepting private candidates for this summer's exam series: [Private Candidates - JCC Joint Council for Qualifications](#).

*How can I support my teenager as a parent given the addictive problems of technology?*

We recommend you speak to your child's school or college for support. Ofqual signpost resources to support students and their parents [here](#).

*For children remote learning or home tutoring, is there a different approach taken to the assessment and grading of their GCSEs and A levels?*

No, the same approach is taken for all students, irrespective of where they study. Exams allow each student to show what they know and understand from the curriculum and, importantly, everyone has the same chance to show what they know understand and can do. They are asked the same questions, at the same time, and they are marked in the same way, anonymously.

If your child is a private candidate, they must be registered to take their 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 for your child to take their GCSE, AS and A level exams, you or your child can contact any school, college or other exam centre to ask whether they offer entries for private candidates. You can also use [JCC's list](#) of all schools, colleges and other exam centres that will make exam entries for private candidates.

If you have difficulties in finding an exam centre, the relevant exam board(s) may be able to help.

*Can Mock exams be administered to help my child? Where do I find mock exams companies?*

You should speak to your child's school or college to find out when they plan to hold mock exams. In addition, exam boards often share past exam papers on their websites:

- [AQA](#)
- [OCR](#)
- [Pearson](#)
- [WJEC Eduqas](#)

*What about IGCSE are they better perceived?*

International GCSEs and GCSEs in England are different qualifications. We do not regulate International GCSEs and we have no powers to intervene in qualifications that we do not regulate. GCSEs are based on content specified by the government and must be assessed in line with Ofqual's rules. The awarding organisations that offer International GCSEs each decide the content for those qualifications and how that content is assessed, which may legitimately be different to GCSEs. In England, International GCSEs have not counted in school performance tables since the corresponding reformed GCSEs became available.

*The A-level subjects are streamlined and most times students and even parents find it hard to choose the right subjects for the examinations, what support system is there for students to make the right A-level choices?*

# ofqual

*As a lot of subjects will be removed from GCSE exams, how does the transition from GCSE to A-level work and what advice will you give to parents to support their child during this phase?*

Students have lots of choices for their next steps. The [National Careers Service \(NCS\)](#) provides free and impartial careers advice, information and guidance and runs a dedicated exam results helpline for students taking qualifications.

The [Get the Jump content hub](#) on the NCS website brings together all post-16 and post-18 education and training choices in one place. In addition, the [UCAS](#) website contains information for students considering their options, on traditional undergraduate degrees through to apprenticeships.

Please speak to your child's school or college to find out what subjects are available for your child.

*What support are available for A-level students? Can you sign-post parents to resources to help our children prepare for these examinations?*

In recognition of the disruption that students have experienced, the following support has been put in place for students taking A level exams and assessments in 2023:

- Grading protection: protection in place for A level student cohorts.
- Spaced-out timetable: exam papers in the same subject well spaced out in the timetable.

We are expecting results in 2023 to be similar to those in pre-pandemic years. The grading protection that we have introduced for A level students means that a student who would have achieved an A before the pandemic should be just as likely to do so in 2023, even if the quality of their work is a little weaker.

There are resources for students and parents, such as Ofqual's [student guide to exams and assessments in 2023](#) and [guide on coping with exam pressure](#). The Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) has [information about exams and assessments](#) on its website. In addition, the Department for Education has a [blog about this year's exam arrangements](#).

*Can you share more light on the marking system for these examinations?*

*What quality assurance are in place to ensure that student's scripts are marked appropriately, no bias, no favouritism and that required checks are done to ensure the students get the marks he/she deserves?*

Awarding organisations decide how exam or assessments are marked. This could be paper based or online and could be marked by several different people. Markers don't usually see your child's name or which school or college they 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 child's qualification includes non-exam assessment, for example practical work or a performance, this may be marked by the awarding organisation, or by their teacher according to the awarding organisation's requirements.

You may find the following blogs on marking helpful:

- [11 things we know about marking and 2 things we don't ...yet](#)
- [Exam marking: how technology is improving the quality of marking](#)



*What are the available alternatives to GCSE & A-levels for students?*

Ofqual regulates a range of qualifications from entry level to level 8 qualifications, across 230 awarding organisations. You should speak to your child's school or college for further information about the qualifications available and you can search for all regulated qualifications on the [Ofqual Register](#).

*Students sit for up to 10 subjects for GCSE examinations, it will be great if there are guidance on each subject available so parents can support their children appropriately especially parents who work double shifts to make ends meet.*

*Can the examination boards provide information in advance about the focus areas for subjects for GCSE, AS and A-level subjects?*

There are 4 exam boards recognised by Ofqual to award GCSE, AS and A level qualifications in England. Each exam board provides information about each specification on their website:

- [AQA](#)
- [OCR](#)
- [Pearson](#)
- [WJEC Eduqas](#)

Your child's school or college will be able to tell you, for each subject, which exam board your child will be sitting exams and assessments with.

*My son is writing the GCSE examinations in a year or so, we have been told that for Arts, Computer science and DT, there are course works which is part of the GCSE examinations, are these course works administered by the individual schools and how are they assessed to ensure it is fair and appropriately marked for consistency?*

Teachers mark non-exam assessments that are used for some subjects. When they do this, exam boards must moderate the teachers' marking to make sure that it is accurate and consistent. This is normally done, at least initially, by checking a sample of the marking of each school or college to see if their marking is in line with national standards.

To make this possible, every school or college must provide a sample of their students' work. The sample is set by the exam boards to include a sufficient number and range of student work (given different marks) to allow them to make a secure judgement about the standard of the school or college's marking.

The sample is scrutinised by the exam board's moderator. The moderator, who must have been trained by the exam board to carry out moderation, reviews the marking of the work to check that the mark scheme has been applied accurately (to the correct standard) and consistently.

If the moderator largely agrees with the marks, then the school or college's marks remain, and they are used to calculate the final qualification grades for the school or college's students.

In making this judgement, exam boards recognise that there may be some small differences between the marks given by the teacher and those given by the moderator that do not indicate that the school made errors in its marking. There may be legitimate differences in judgement between the school or college marker and the moderator about the exact mark they judge a piece of work should receive. Reflecting this, exam boards normally choose to put in place a small 'tolerance' between the marks the school or college give, and the moderator thought appropriate. It is only where the exam board finds that the difference between the marking of a

# ofqual

school or college, and that of the moderator, is greater than the tolerance that they will judge the marking to be inaccurate.