

Part of Education and childcare during coronavirus



Guidance School and college responsibility for autumn exams Updated 7 September 2020

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1. Main points

In most cases, students will use the grades they received in the summer to move onto their next step. The grades awarded this summer are formal grades, with the same status as grades awarded in any other year.

There will also be an opportunity for students to sit exams in the autumn.

In cases where students wish to sit exams, we expect the school or college that entered them in the summer to enter them in autumn and make sure they have somewhere to sit their exams.

There is an exception for students who are required to continue to study maths or English (because they have not yet achieved a grade 4 or above in maths or English GCSE). In these cases, the school or college where the student is on roll from September will be responsible for entering them, as usual.

The Department for Education (DfE) exam support service will help schools and colleges to book sites and invigilators where required. Schools and colleges will also be able to claim funding through the service for essential additional costs associated with running exams in the autumn, including exam fees charged by awarding organisations, alternative sites, and invigilation.

We expect schools and colleges to pay fees for all students who were due to sit exams in the summer, rather than passing the cost on to students or their families.

'Schools and colleges' in this guidance refers to:

- state-funded schools
further education, sixth-form and tertiary colleges
independent training providers
adult and community learning providers
independent schools
private exam centres

'Autumn exams' refers to the additional GCSE, AS and A level and vocational and technical qualifications (VTQs) which are being held in autumn 2020 following the cancellation of exams and assessments in the summer. It includes the additional VTQs which will be held in the 2021 spring term.

2. Autumn exam arrangements

Following the cancellation of 2019 to 2020 academic year summer exams, students received their centre assessment grades, except where calculated grades were higher, in which case the calculated grades were awarded instead.

These summer grades are formal grades, with the same status as grades awarded in any other year, and we expect the vast majority of students to be able to use them to move on to their next steps.

We announced that there will be an opportunity for students to sit exams in autumn 2020 and for some vocational and technical qualifications (VTQs) in the spring 2021 term. These exams will act as a backstop to the summer arrangements.

Students will be able to sit them if they are unhappy with their summer grade, or if they need an improved result to move onto the next stage of their education. There will also be a small group of students for whom there was not enough evidence for a grade to be awarded in the summer, and it is particularly important that these students are able to sit exams in autumn 2020.

This guidance sets out schools' and colleges' responsibility for entering students to the autumn exams, how the cost of fees will be covered, and the support that DfE is providing for sites and invigilators (through the DfE exam support service).

This guidance relates to all schools and colleges that are approved to deliver GCSE, AS and A level and vocational and technical qualifications (VTQs) exams and assessments, whether or not they are state funded. It should be read alongside the following wider guidance:

- Ofqual's decisions on its consultation on an additional GCSE, AS and A level exam series in autumn 2020, including the decision that exams should be available in all subjects
guidance for full opening for schools and full opening for special schools or for further education (FE) colleges on actions for the autumn term for information about how to operate safely and follow guidelines set out by Public Health England

Further information about conducting exams is published by JCQ, including information about timings for exams. Exams officers may wish to review the JCQ's instructions for conducting examinations and any guidance from the exam boards and awarding organisations for the qualifications for which you have entries. JCQ have also provided guidance for the autumn term on reasonable adjustments and using alternative sites for exams which exams officers should ensure they are familiar with. For those VTQs in scope, exams officers should ensure they are familiar with relevant guidance published by the awarding organisations they are working with.

The autumn exam series will be covered by the DfE's yellow label script collection service, as usual. All participating centres will receive an email advising how and when to make collection bookings with Parcelforce Worldwide. The dispatch of exam scripts: yellow label service guidance covers the procedures and packaging requirements.

3. Responsibility for entering students for autumn exams

We expect the school or college that entered students for the summer series to enter them for autumn exams (with the exception at 4. below). In the great majority of cases, the school or college that the student attended will know them, will have existing links with the relevant awarding organisation and will be aware of any reasonable adjustments that are needed.

We expect schools or colleges to extend these arrangements to students who were private candidates in the summer (candidates who were not on roll but for whom they had made, or intended to make, an exam entry), as well as for students who were on their roll. This continuity will be especially important for some private candidates since it is more likely that there will not have been enough evidence to provide them with a summer grade, so autumn exams will be essential for many of them.

We appreciate that there will be cases where students, and schools or colleges, will want to agree different local arrangements between themselves. This will often be sensible - for example where a student has moved and it is a better experience and more practical for them to sit the exams at the new institution. However, our expectation is that the original school or college will take overall responsibility for ensuring that the candidate has somewhere appropriate to sit their exams if they wish to do so. Where a different arrangement is made, we expect the original school or college to be responsible for contacting the new institution and ensuring that students taking autumn exams are content and are not charged exam fees.

4. Students who are required to continue to study maths or English

For students who are required to continue to study maths or English (as part of 'the condition of funding'), the school or college where the student is on roll from September will be responsible for entering them for the qualifications, as they usually are.

Information for institutions on maths and English condition of funding can be found at 16 to 19 funding: maths and English condition of funding. Arrangements for these students will remain unchanged.

Students who wish to sit autumn exams in maths or English who have achieved a grade 4 and above and wish to improve their grade should be entered by the school or college where they were due to sit summer exams.

5. The DfE exam support service

DfE is providing support for schools and colleges to run autumn exams. The DfE exam support service will help schools and colleges with any additional costs associated with running exams in the autumn, including fees charged by awarding organisations, sites and invigilation.

The support will be open to all types of schools and colleges running the additional autumn exams. This covers:

- state-funded schools
further education, sixth-form and tertiary colleges
independent training providers
independent schools
adult and community learning providers
private exam centres

The service will provide support for A and AS levels and GCSEs (with the exception below), VTQs and other general qualifications at level 1 / 2, level 2 and level 3, where students received grades in summer 2020 and there is a scheduled assessment opportunity for the qualification in the autumn and spring series. Other VTQs, including Functional Skills, are not in scope.

The service will not cover English and maths GCSE exams taken by students who did not achieve a grade 4 or higher in these subjects, because these exams take place in November in a normal year and schools and colleges will have planned and budgeted for them.

The claims process and further guidance on how to make claims will be available later this year.

Read the DfE exam support service guidance.

6. Responsibilities for paying fees

The awarding organisations are responsible for their own approach to charging fees for exams. We anticipate that they will charge fees for autumn exams in the usual way.

However, the government is clear that given the unique circumstances in which the autumn exams are being run, students themselves and their families should not have to meet the cost of fees if they want to enter.

We expect schools and colleges to pay fees for students whom they are entering for autumn exams, whether or not those students are on their roll. Schools and colleges should not face additional costs for fees, over and above what they would have paid had summer exams gone ahead, so the DfE exam support service will provide funding if needed to ensure that schools and colleges do not incur a net loss, taking their autumn fees and any rebates/credit notes they receive in respect of summer exams together. This will also apply to fees incurred for entering students in the autumn to sit VTQs for which they received results in summer 2020.

The awarding organisations are providing information to schools and colleges on any rebates they can expect in relation to summer 2020 exams. While awarding organisations will have incurred some savings with the summer, they will also have incurred costs, including providing students with summer grades, and preparatory work for the summer series, that had already been completed before exams were cancelled. It is for the individual awarding organisations to decide on rebate arrangements, reflecting their particular circumstances.

DfE will not provide funding in relation to any administrative fees charged by schools and colleges, over and above the fees charged by the awarding organisations. We do not expect schools and colleges to charge administrative fees to students who were on their roll in the summer. Where private candidates have already paid an administrative fee for the summer, we would not expect them to be charged twice.

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