



Rt Hon Nadhim Zahawi MP
Secretary of State

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11 November 2021

Dear Robert,

Update on contingency plans for GCSEs, AS and A levels in 2022

I am writing to provide an update on decisions made by the Department for Education and Ofqual regarding contingency plans for GCSEs, AS and A levels in 2022, in the unlikely event that it proves necessary to cancel exams.

The Government has been clear that, other things being equal, exams and other formal assessments remain the fairest way of assessing students. Our support for education recovery, public health measures and adaptations to exams and the approach to grading will help to ensure they can proceed safely and fairly in 2022. However, there remains a small risk that further disruption due to the COVID-19 pandemic will mean it is not possible for exams to go ahead safely or fairly.

On 30 September the Department and Ofqual therefore set out our intention to use Teacher Assessed Grades as the contingency in case exams cannot go ahead as planned, and published a joint consultation which I wrote to you about at the time. Today, following analysis of the responses, the consultation [decisions document](#) has been published.

The Department and Ofqual outlined proposals in the consultation on how teachers should collect evidence over the rest of this academic year to support the awarding of Teacher Assessed Grades, if necessary, including arrangements for private candidates. The consultation also sought views on improvements to the 2021 arrangements for quality assurance and appeals.

Having reflected on the responses to the consultation, Ofqual has now published [guidance](#) for schools, colleges and other exam centres on collecting evidence that would be used to assess students' performance if exams were cancelled. The guidance is being published now so that teachers know how to collect evidence from their students in advance of any decision to cancel exams. The guidance aims to minimise burden on both teachers and students and Ofqual has confirmed that, where possible, centres should use their existing assessment plans.

Ofqual will only publish guidance on how to determine Teacher Assessed Grades, and centres will only be required to develop policies for awarding Teacher Assessed Grades, if exams are cancelled.

Ofqual have also confirmed that they will not take decisions at this point about the quality assurance arrangements that would be used for Teacher Assessed Grades in 2022, or how student appeals would work. These are both dependent on the timing of any decision to cancel exams and the reason for that decision, including any public health restrictions in place at the time. Any decisions taken in due course will take account of the responses to the recent consultation.

Finally, the decisions document also confirms that if it proves necessary to cancel exams in some parts of England, exams will be cancelled for all students and the Teacher Assessed Grades approach will be implemented nationally.

The Government remains firmly committed to exams going ahead next summer and I want to reiterate that it is highly unlikely that we will need to implement Teacher Assessed Grades next summer. However, given the uncertain path of the pandemic it is right that we have robust contingency plans in place so that we can be confident that even in the worst case scenario students can receive a grade that reflects their achievements and enables them to progress to the next stage of their lives. I am confident that the guidance Ofqual plans to publish will reduce the workload relating to evidence-gathering for Teacher Assessed Grades in comparison with the arrangements we put in place for 2021. I hope confirmation of these plans provides your constituents with reassurance that our plans are robust and proportionate.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your engagement on these important matters and I look forward to continuing working with you and the Committee.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. Zahawi', with a large loop at the end.

Rt Hon Nadhim Zahawi MP
Secretary of State for Education