



2020-0032060POGibb

**Rt Hon Nick Gibb MP**  
Minister of State for School Standards

Sanctuary Buildings, 20 Great Smith Street, Westminster, London, SW1P 3BT  
tel: 0370 000 2288 [www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus](http://www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus)

Rt Hon Sir George Howarth MP  
By email: [george.howarth.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:george.howarth.mp@parliament.uk)

9 November 2020

Dear George,

Thank you for your email of 18 June, addressed to the Secretary of State, enclosing correspondence from your constituent, regarding examinations in 2021. I am replying as the Minister of State for School Standards.

As you are aware, all pupils, in all year groups, have returned to school, as this is the best place for their education, development and wellbeing. We appreciate that the COVID-19 outbreak has caused stress and uncertainty for many students, including for those who are due to sit examinations and assessments next year and who will have experienced disruption to their education. We know that examinations and assessments are the best and fairest way of judging students' performance. The Secretary of State has confirmed that next year's GCSE, AS level, and A level examination series will go ahead.

The majority of examinations will take place three weeks later than usual, starting on 7 June and ending on 2 July for almost all GCSEs, AS levels, and A levels. One mathematics and one English GCSE examination will be held just before the May half term, helping to manage potential disruption and giving any Year 11 pupils who are affected by COVID-19 the best possible chance of sitting a paper in each of these core subjects. Students will now have more time to prepare for their examinations next year, to help address the disruption caused by the outbreak. Results will be delivered in August as usual; on 24 August for AS and A levels, and on 27 August for GCSEs. Students will be able to start the following academic year as normal.

The autumn examination series, involving more than 20,000 entries, is underway. However, due to the COVID-19 outbreak, we are also considering a range of scenarios that may affect students' ability to sit examinations and are developing contingency plans accordingly.

The Secretary of State has written to request that Ofqual, the regulator of qualifications, examinations, and assessments in England, work closely with the Department, school and further education leaders, examination boards, unions, and the higher education sector to develop these arrangements.

The Government is engaging widely with the education sector to identify any risks to examinations at a national, local, and individual student level, and to consider measures needed to address any potential disruption. This could be a student unable to sit examinations due to illness or self isolation, or schools affected by a local outbreak during the examination season resulting in examination centres not being able to open. More detail will be published later in the autumn.

In addition, subject level changes to the content of assessments confirmed by Ofqual will reduce the pressure on teachers and students this academic year. Further information is available at: [tinyurl.com/YakPd66G](https://tinyurl.com/YakPd66G) and [tinyurl.com/Y46b8n9J](https://tinyurl.com/Y46b8n9J).

The changes to next year's examination timetable are designed to release time for teaching and studying, and to take account of public health considerations. This, together with the changes to assessments announced by Ofqual, gives teachers, school leaders, and pupils clarity on what will be assessed in examinations next summer. The changes will also reduce pressure on teaching time and ensure that young people taking examinations next year have the same opportunities to progress as students have in previous years.

Ofqual has also consulted on how assessments of vocational and technical qualifications will be adapted to free up teaching time and respond to any future public health measures. It is expected that for the majority of vocational and technical qualifications that are taken alongside, or instead of, GCSEs, AS levels, and A levels, awarding organisations will align timetables with 2021 examinations.

We have announced a package worth £1 billion to ensure that schools have the resources they need to help all pupils make up for lost teaching time. This package includes a universal catch up premium of £650 million and £350 million for a National Tutoring Programme for disadvantaged pupils. Whilst head teachers will decide how the money is spent, the Education Endowment Foundation has published guidance on effective interventions to help schools make the best use of resources.

This £1 billion package is on top of the £14 billion three year funding settlement announced last year, recognising the additional work schools will need to do to help pupils to catch up.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Neil', written in a cursive style.