



12th November 2020

Dear parent/carer,

You may be aware of the First Minister's statement confirming the cancellation of GCSE exams in the Summer of 2021, a copy of which is attached.

While this gives us a degree of clarity, there continues to be some uncertainty and unanswered questions surrounding aspects of the statement.

For example, reference is made to centre based judgements being made using 'externally set' and 'externally marked' assessments. We understand that WJEC will be involved in producing and marking these assessments. However, we have no information about what these assessments will look like and the specific role they will play in supporting our centre-based judgements. We only know that schools will not need to administer the first assessment materials until the second half of the spring term. We are due to receive further information in December.


I have spoken to Year 11 to reassure them that, regardless of the assessment process, we will continue to deliver all of our GCSE courses in the same way we have done to date, and that all courses are very much on track to be completed in time for the summer, albeit with some reduced content already specified by the National Regulator. It is also our intention to continue with our scheduled mock exams which run from 20th to 26th November. The outcomes from these will provide us with a measure of the progress pupils have made and the targeted work necessary to help them catch up with any work they have missed or don't understand. Please be assured, the mock exams will **not** be used to generate centre assessed grades for the summer.

We have also started providing after-school catch-up/revision sessions in some subjects. Your son/daughter has been provided with a timetable on Google Classroom, and they are encouraged to attend the sessions they feel would benefit them. In some cases, teachers have targeted particular pupils who they feel require this support. Please encourage your child to attend these sessions. Further subject areas will be available after Christmas.

Please contact Mrs Rhian Scrimshaw, Year 11 Progress Manager if you have any queries.

Thank you for your continued support

Yours sincerely


Mr P Edwards
Headteacher





10 November 2020

Dear colleague

I am writing to you to confirm my intention to direct Qualifications Wales that there should be no end of year exams for GCSE, AS and A level qualifications in 2021.

The primary reason for my decision is down to fairness; the time learners will spend in schools and colleges will vary hugely and, in this situation, it is impossible to guarantee a level playing field for exams to take place.

- Instead of exams, we intend to work with schools and colleges to take forward teacher-managed assessments.
- These should include assessments that will be externally set and marked, but delivered within a classroom environment under teacher supervision.
- My expectation is that these will form the basis for centre-based outcomes which will be linked to an agreed national approach to provide consistency across Wales.

I have heard first hand from many learners about how worried they are about the prospect of taking exams and the pressure they feel under to get through as much course content as possible.

I have been clear from the beginning that my over-riding priority for any approach to qualifications in 2021 is to ensure that learners in exam years develop the knowledge, skills and experience that they need to confidently progress to their next steps – whether that is employment, training or further and higher education.

Removing exams frees up the entire summer term which is normally focused on preparing for and sitting exams, for additional teaching and learning.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

A Design and Delivery Advisory Group has been set up and will meet this week, chaired by Geraint Rees. The proposed approach to centre-based outcomes, an appeals process and arrangements for private candidates, will be developed by this group, involving school and college leaders, supported by Welsh Government and advised by Qualifications Wales and WJEC.

My intention is for this work to be finalised in December so that guidance and supporting materials can be in place for the start of the spring term.

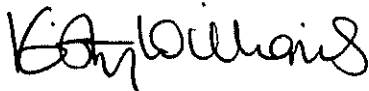
While done for the best intentions, I can give you reassurance that the first assessment activities will not need to commence until the latter half of the spring term.

We have engaged with universities across the UK and have been assured that this decision will not disadvantage Welsh learners as long as our alternative arrangements are robust and transparent and I am confident that they will be.

The situation for Vocational Qualifications is more complex and will require extra work. Welsh Government officials will continue to support Qualifications Wales as they work closely with other regulators to ensure a pragmatic approach that works in learners' interests and gives them clarity about the way forward.

I will write to you again to update you on progress.

Yours sincerely



Kirsty Williams AS/MS

Y Gweinidog Addysg
Minister for Education