

Proposed changes to the assessment of GCSEs, AS and A levels in 2022

Consultation response by the [Home Educators' Qualifications Association](#)

1 August 2021

Proposals at a glance

Adaptations to exams and assessments

GCSE English literature exams in 2022

To what extent do you agree or disagree that centres should have some choice of topics on which their students will answer questions for GCSE English literature exams in 2022?

Neither agree nor disagree

Do you have any comments on our proposed approach to carrying forward specific assessment arrangements for GCSE English literature in 2021 into 2022?

We are not concerned about content reduction in principle. However, we are concerned that if the needs of students learning outside of school are not considered, content reduction is likely to disadvantage those students.

We are concerned about the proposal to give “centres” a choice of topics. Most home-educated students will have no connections with centres at the point where choices about topics need to be made. In order to avoid disadvantaging these students, the assessment arrangements should make explicit that it is the students and their parents that are to be given a choice of topics; centres cannot choose on their behalf.

We are concerned that it will be difficult for centres to accept entries from private candidates who have chosen different topics to their own students. More generally, we are concerned that the proposed arrangements will increase the work involved with accepting private candidate entries, making centres less inclined to accommodate private candidates, and more likely to make administrative mistakes when they do accept entries.

We are concerned about information being made available to private candidates. Information provided to centres early on in the year will not be passed on to private candidates who only register shortly before exams. In order to ensure that information about topic choices is available to private candidates, it is essential that the information is made publicly available, not sent privately to centres, or published on exam board pages that are not available to candidates.

We are concerned about the clarity of information. Teachers in schools typically deal only with a single subject, and can devote considerable resources to studying the information that the exam boards release about that subject. In contrast, home educators typically prepare their children for a wide variety of subjects; furthermore, they are less familiar with the kind of material produced by exam boards. In order to ensure that home-educated students are not disadvantaged, it is essential that information produced by the exam boards is succinct and easy to understand, even for those who are not professional teachers.

We are concerned that the exam timetable may favour those who select particular options by clustering together certain topics.

We are concerned that the exam boards may only produce preparation materials for the most popular options chosen by schools, disadvantaging home-educated students who may select more unusual options, since they are less constrained in their choices.

We would be happy to work with the DfE, Ofqual, and the exam boards to address these concerns about the implementation.

GCSE history exams in 2022

To what extent do you agree or disagree that centres should have some choice of topics on which their students will answer questions for GCSE history exams in 2022?

Neither agree nor disagree

Do you have any comments on our proposed approach to carrying forward specific assessment arrangements for GCSE history for 2021 into 2022?

Please refer to our comments about the carrying forward of specific assessment arrangements for GCSE English Literature.

GCSE ancient history exams in 2022

To what extent do you agree or disagree that centres should have some choice of topics on which their students will answer questions for GCSE ancient history exams in 2022?

Neither agree nor disagree

Do you have any comments on our proposed approach to carrying forward specific assessment arrangements for GCSE ancient history for 2021 into 2022?

Please refer to our comments about the carrying forward of specific assessment arrangements for GCSE English Literature.

GCSE geography exams in 2022

To what extent do you agree or disagree that we should allow centres to have some choice of content on which their students will answer questions in GCSE geography, on the lines set out in Annex B?

Neither agree nor disagree

Do you have any comments on our proposed approach to allowing centres to have some choice of content on which their students will answer questions in GCSE geography exams in 2022?

Please refer to our comments about the carrying forward of specific assessment arrangements for GCSE English Literature.

Practical science work

To what extent do you agree or disagree that we should carry forward into academic year 2021 to 2022 the arrangements in place for 2021 to 2022, that allow centres to deliver practical work in GCSE biology, chemistry, physics, combined science, geology and astronomy, AS level biology, chemistry, physics and geology, and AS and A level environmental science by demonstration?

Agree

Do you have any comments on our proposed approach to carrying forward specific assessment arrangements for 2021 into 2022 for GCSE biology, chemistry, physics and combined science, geology and astronomy, AS biology, chemistry, physics and geology, and AS and A level environmental science?

We welcome the more flexible approach to assessing the practical aspects of these science qualifications. The onerous practical requirements make it difficult for home-educated students to access these qualifications. We hope that the possibility of carrying this flexibility forward into future years will be seriously considered, since it would make the qualifications more widely accessible.

Practical endorsement

To what extent do you agree or disagree that we should carry forward from academic year 2020 to 2021 into academic year 2021 to 2022 the arrangements that allow centres to assess the CPAC across the minimum number of practical activities required to enable students to demonstrate their competence in A level biology, chemistry, physics and geology?

Agree

To what extent do you agree or disagree that we should carry forward from academic year 2020 to 2021 into academic year 2021 to 2022 the arrangements to allow the remote monitoring of centres' application of CPAC?

Agree

Do you have any comments on our proposed approach to carrying forward specific assessment arrangements from academic year 2020 to 2021 into academic year 2021 to 2022 for A level biology, chemistry, physics and geology?

We welcome the more flexible approach to assessing the practical aspects of A level science qualifications. It is currently difficult and very expensive for home-educated students to access A level science practicals, and we anticipate that these changes will reduce the burden on exam centres and consequently the cost. We hope that the possibility of carrying this flexibility forward into future years will be seriously considered, since it would make the qualifications more widely accessible.

Art and design qualifications

To what extent do you agree or disagree that we should carry forward from academic year 2020 to 2021 into academic year 2021 to 2022 the arrangements to remove (where applicable) the exam board set task in GCSE, AS and A level art and design?

Neither agree nor disagree

Do you have any comments on our proposed approach to carrying forward from academic year 2020 to 2021 into academic year 2021 to 2022 the specific assessment arrangements for GCSE, AS and A level art and design?

There are currently almost no centres that are willing to accept entries from home-educated students for Art and Design qualifications; it is unlikely that this proposal will make a significant difference. In 2019 there were only 56 GCSE entries and 59 A level entries nationwide.

Advance information

To what extent do you agree or disagree that exam boards should provide advance information about the focus of the content of exams for the majority of GCSE, AS and A level subjects?

Neither agree nor disagree

To what extent do you agree or disagree that we should be flexible in the timing of the release of advance information in order to respond to the impact on education of any potential worsening of the pandemic?

Disagree

Do you have any comments on the proposed flexible approach to the timing of the release of advance information in 2022?

We are concerned about uniform access to advance information. The Government's assessment arrangements in 2021 disadvantaged home-educated students, because (among many other reasons) materials were provided in advance to schools but not to home educators.

In order to avoid similar problems in 2022, advance information should be made publicly available, not disseminated privately to exam centres.

We are also concerned that the differences in exam preparation approaches between schools and home educators, “flexibly” adjusting timing to accommodate schools is likely to disadvantage home-educated students. In place of flexibility, we would prefer a timetable setting out potential dates for release with very clear criteria and messaging around possible changes.

GCSE English literature

To what extent do you agree or disagree that for GCSE English literature, where we propose that centres should have some choice of topics on which their students will answer questions, the exam boards should not provide advance information about the focus of the content of exams in addition?

Neither agree nor disagree

Do you have any comments on our proposal not to provide advance information for 2022 for GCSE English literature?

GCSE history

To what extent do you agree or disagree that for GCSE history, where we propose that centres should have some choice of topics on which their students will answer questions, the exam boards should not provide advance information about the focus of the content of exams in addition?

Neither agree nor disagree

Do you have any comments on our proposal not to provide advance information for 2022 for GCSE history?

GCSE ancient history

To what extent do you agree or disagree that for GCSE ancient history, where we propose that centres should have some choice of topics on which their students will answer questions, the exam boards should not provide advance information about the focus of the content of exams in addition?

Neither agree nor disagree

Do you have any comments on our proposal not to provide advance information for 2022 for GCSE ancient history?

GCSE geography

To what extent do you agree or disagree that for GCSE geography, where we propose that centres should have some choice of content on which their students will answer questions, the exam boards should not provide advance information about the focus of the content of exams in addition?

Neither agree nor disagree

Do you have any comments on our proposal not to provide advance information for 2022 for GCSE geography?

Other subjects

Are there any GCSE subjects for which advance information about the focus of the content of exams should NOT be given to students in advance of the exam?

[no response]

Are there any AS subjects for which advance information about the focus of the content of exams should NOT be given to students in advance of the exam?

[no response]

Are there any A level subjects for which advance information about the focus of the content of exams should NOT be given to students in advance of the exam?

[no response]

If you have identified any subjects above, do you have any comments on the subjects that should NOT be given advance information about the focus of exams in 2022?

Support materials

To what extent do you agree or disagree that a formulae sheet should be provided in the exam room for GCSE mathematics in 2022?

Neither agree nor disagree

Do you have any comments on the proposal to provide a formulae sheet in the exam room for GCSE mathematics in 2022?

It is essential that a formulae sheet, if available, should be published long in advance of the exams to support its use in exam practice.

In order to avoid disadvantaging home-educated students, information about the formulae sheet (including the date when it will be made available) should be published openly, not sent privately to exam centres.

To what extent do you agree or disagree that a revised equation sheet covering all relevant equations should be provided in the exam room for GCSE physics and combined science in 2022?

Neither agree nor disagree

Do you have any comments on the proposal to provide a revised equation sheet covering all relevant equations in the exam room for GCSE physics and combined science in 2022?

Please refer to our comments on the formulae sheet.

Equality impact assessment

Are there other potential equality impacts that we have not explored?

Yes

If yes, what are they?

There does not appear to be exploration of the impacts on private candidates.

Do you have any suggestions for how any potential negative impacts on particular groups of students could be mitigated?

Regulatory impact assessment

Are there additional activities associated with changing the exam and assessment arrangements for students taking GCSE, AS and A level qualifications in summer 2022 that we have not identified above?

No

What, if any, additional costs do you expect you would incur if the proposed changes to the exam and assessment arrangements were introduced for summer 2022?

Do you have any suggestions for alternative approaches that could reduce burden and costs?

Confidentiality and feedback

Do you wish any part of your response to remain confidential?

No