



ASSOCIATION
OF COLLEGES

Ofqual consultation on arrangements for an Autumn 2021 exam series

AoC responds April 2021

Arrangements for an Autumn 2021 exam series AoC responds - April 2021

Proposals

Exams for GCSEs and A levels in summer 2021 have been cancelled because of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. When the government set out its policy on how grades for these qualifications should be issued instead, it also confirmed that it wanted students to have the opportunity to take exams in autumn 2021 if they wish to try and improve on their teacher assessed grades with which they will be issued this summer. The Secretary of State, [in his direction to Ofqual](#), said he expects Ofqual to make provision for this.

AoC response

2021 will be the second year that a full autumn exam series has been proposed and our view remains that this is a costly and unnecessary diversion for students, centres and awarding organisations. Given the arrangements being put in place to grade all candidates, including private candidates, this summer, there is even less of a case for an autumn series in 2021 than there was in 2020. The 2020 autumn series attracted 1% of GCSE summer entries and 2% of summer A Level entries, with some national subject entries having fewer than 100 entries. This is a very poor use of resources and where students do choose to enter, it could distract from their studies in the 2021/22 academic year. We are also concerned that it may serve to widen achievement gaps as more advantaged students may be coached or tutored for autumn series exams.

Question 1: To what extent do you agree or disagree that students who receive a teacher assessed grade in summer 2021 should be eligible to enter for the corresponding:

- GCSE exams in autumn 2021
- AS exams in autumn 2021
- A level exams in autumn 2021?

Disagree

Question 2: To what extent do you agree or disagree that exam boards should be able to accept entries for the autumn exams from students who did not enter to receive a grade in summer 2021 but who, in the opinion of the exam board, would have entered for the summer 2021 exams had they taken place?

Disagree.

Question 3: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the autumn 2021 exams should be open to all students, regardless of any actual or planned intended entry in summer 2021?

- GCSEs
- AS
- A level

Disagree

Question 4: Do you have any comments on which students should be able to take exams in autumn 2021?

We do not think an additional autumn series is necessary.

Question 5: To what extent do you agree or disagree that students entering GCSE, AS or A levels in autumn 2021 should be assessed on their performance in exams only?

Agree

Question 6: Do you have any comments in our proposal that, with the exception of art and design qualifications, grades should be determined by students' performance in exams only?

Question 7: To what extent do you agree or disagree that students entering GCSE, AS or A level art and design should be assessed on their performance in an exam board set task only?

Agree

Question 8: To what extent do you agree or disagree that students' work in response to the art and design tasks should be marked by the exam boards?

Agree

Question 9: Do you have any comments on our proposed approach to art and design qualifications?

Question 10: To what extent do you agree or disagree that students should be able to carry forward any grade for practical science and geology skills to the autumn 2021 series?

Agree

Question 11: Do you have any comments on our proposed approach to the separately reported grades for A level practical science and geology skills?

Question 12: To what extent do you agree or disagree that students should be able to carry forward any grade for spoken language in GCSE English language and modern foreign languages?

Agree

Question 13: Do you have any comments on our proposed approach to the separately reported grades and for GCSE English language and modern foreign language spoken language skills?

Question 14: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the autumn exam papers should be in their normal form, in terms of:

- the number of exams per subject
- the style of the questions
- the format of the papers
- the conditions under which they are taken

Agree

Question 15: To what extent do you agree or disagree that students should not be given advance information about topics that will be included in the autumn exams?

Agree

Question 16: To what extent do you agree or disagree that students taking autumn exams should only have access to the usual support materials when taking an exam?

Agree

Question 17: Do you have any comments on our proposals about the form of the autumn 2021 exams?

Question 18: To what extent do you agree or disagree that:

- AS and A level exams should be held in October 2021 (with entries being required by early September)

Disagree

- GCSE exams should be held in November and early December 2021 (with entries being required by early October)

Disagree

- GCSE English language and maths exams should be held later than usual?

Disagree

Question 19: Do you have any comments on our proposals for when exams should take place?

The traditional GCSE English and maths November session which attracts a large entry should not be disrupted to accommodate the smaller and more extended exceptional new autumn series which will attract far fewer entries.

Question 20: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the usual arrangements for reviews of marking and appeals should apply to the autumn 2021 exam series?

Agree

Question 21: Do you have any comments on our proposal that the usual provisions for reviews of marking and appeals should apply in autumn 2021?

Question 22: To what extent do you agree or disagree that an exam board must, at the request of a student, reissue a certificate to show the better of the grades issued to a student in summer 2021 and autumn 2021?

Agree

Question 23: To what extent do you agree or disagree that an exam board should not reissue a certificate to show the better of the grades issued in summer 2020 and autumn 2021?

Agree

Question 24: Should we require or permit the exam boards to offer GCSE exams in autumn 2021?

Permit

Question 25: Should we require or permit the exam boards to offer AS exams in autumn 2021 or should we prohibit them from offering AS exams?

Permit

Question 26: Should we require or permit the exam boards to offer A level exams in autumn 2021?

Permit

Question 27: To what extent do you agree or disagree that, if we require exams boards to offer exams, we should lift this requirement for any subject for which there have been no entries by the entry deadline?

Agree

Question 28: Do you have comments on whether we should require or permit the exam boards to provide GCSE and A level exams in autumn 2021?

Question 29: Do you have comments on whether we should require or permit exam boards to provide AS exams in autumn 2021 or whether we should prohibit them from doing so?

Question 30: To what extent do you agree or disagree that we should not require the exam board to offer AEA exams in autumn 2021?

Agree

Question 31: To what extent do you agree or disagree that we should not introduce any rules about the submission of project qualifications in autumn 2021?

Agree

Question 32: Do you have comments on our proposed approach to AEA and Project qualifications in autumn 2021?

Question 33: Are there any other aspects of the possible arrangements for the autumn exams that could have a possible negative impact on students because of their protected characteristics that we have not identified? If yes, what are they?

We are concerned that it may have the effect of widening achievement gaps as more advantaged students may enter and be coached or tutored for autumn series exams.

Question 34: How could any negative impacts be removed or mitigated?

Not running an additional autumn series.

Question 35: We have set out our understanding of the impact of our proposals on schools, colleges and exam boards. Are there any other potential impacts that we have not identified?

An additional autumn series will require staffing, accommodation, administrative and organizational resources at a time of great pressure. It would be expensive and disruptive for centres and for awarding organisations and will not fully recover costs, effectively spreading these across all centres.

Question 36: Are there any additional steps we could take to reduce the costs or burdens of our proposals?

By not running an additional autumn series and ensuring that any savings from Summer 2021 are returned in full to centres as a rebate.