



Correspondence

# Letter to parents April 2023

Published 27 April 2023

## **Applies to England**

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Firstly, I would like to introduce myself. I am Dr Jo Saxton, Chief Regulator at Ofqual, the regulator of qualifications, exams and assessments in England. As a parent myself, I understand it can be nerve-racking when your child is preparing to take their exams. You want to give your support.

So, as your child, or person you are care-giver to, enters the final weeks before their exams, I want to make sure you're aware of the additional support that we have put in place this year for students taking exams to recognise the disruption they've faced.

## Information available

Ofqual has produced a [student guide to exams and assessments in 2023](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofqual-student-guide-2023/ofqual-student-guide-2023) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofqual-student-guide-2023/ofqual-student-guide-2023>), giving you more information, so both you and your child know what to expect this summer.

We have also worked with experts to produce a [guide for students and parents on coping with exam pressure](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coping-with-exam-pressure-a-guide-for-students) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coping-with-exam-pressure-a-guide-for-students>), to help them prepare.

## Recognising disruption

In recognition of the disruption that students have experienced, the following support has been put in place for students taking GCSE and A level exams and assessments in 2023:



Infographic detailing the support for students in summer 2023

**Support materials:** students will get formulae and equation sheets in some GCSEs and won't have to memorise as much.

**Grading protection:** protection in place for GCSE and A level student cohorts.

**Spaced-out timetable:** exam papers in the same subject well spaced out in the timetable.

**Help with languages:** modern foreign language GCSE papers no longer have to test unfamiliar vocabulary.

We are expecting results in 2023 to be similar to those in pre-pandemic years. The grading protection that we have introduced for GCSE and A level students means that a student who would have achieved an A before the pandemic should be just as likely to do so in 2023, even if the quality of their work is a little weaker.

There are some important points to remember:

- The rules are the same for everyone. When marking and grading work, examiners don't know your child's name, where they studied or took their qualifications, or where in the country they live.
- Examiners are expert and experienced. Our survey of examiners in 2022 showed that GCSE, AS and A level examiners have, on average, 10 years' examining experience
- Universities understand the approach to grading in 2023 and took this into account when making offers. The overall number of university places available is not governed by the number of top grades
- There is no set number, or 'cap', on the number of students who can achieve each grade
- It's no harder or easier to achieve a particular grade from one exam board to the next

Vocational and Technical Qualifications are different and varied, and an appropriate grading approach will be used for each qualification. Awarding organisations offering vocational and technical qualifications that are similar in structure to GCSEs and A levels, will take into account the grading approach used in GCSE and A levels where appropriate.

## Results days

Students will receive their results on:

- 17 August for AS and A levels, T Levels and vocational and technical qualifications taken alongside A levels at level 3
- 24 August for GCSEs

For students studying a level 2 VTQ, it is likely that they will receive results on or before 24 August.

Additional steps have been taken to ensure level 3 vocational and technical qualification results used for progression are issued in August alongside A levels. For other vocational and technical qualifications, your child's school or college will be able to tell you when to expect their results.

## Next steps

Schools and colleges offer advice and support to their students taking qualifications. Make sure you know who your child can speak to at school or college if they are worried about their revision or taking exams. There is plenty of help and advice out there.

When your child receives their results in August, there will be lots of choices open to them and support will be available to discuss their next steps. The [National Careers Service](https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/) (<https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/>) provides free and impartial careers advice, information and guidance and runs a dedicated exam results helpline for all students taking qualifications. Of course, for those who have studied at school or college, their teachers will be on hand to help give advice and guidance.

I'd like to extend our best wishes to everyone taking exams this summer.

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