



Exam contingency arrangements 2022

Summary & discussion for CST members

Introduction

Following the recent consultation by Ofqual & DfE on exam contingency arrangements for 2022, the consultation [outcome](#) and Ofqual's resultant [guidance](#) have been published. This summary and discussion is intended to draw out key points, particularly regarding possible implications for mock exams and any other assessments schools intend to run, or have already run, but **you should also read the full guidance**.

The approach to contingency arrangements is described as follows:

"The government is clear that students entering GCSEs, AS or A levels in 2022 should expect to take exams in the summer and complete any non-exam assessments in the usual way throughout the year."

"If exams had to be cancelled in summer 2022, students' grades would instead be determined by their teachers, using a Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs) approach similar to that used in summer 2021. TAGs are based on teachers' assessment of their students' work."

The Ofqual guidance is intended to support the [collection of evidence](#) (to prepare for the eventuality of TAGs should exams be cancelled), not the processes for deciding a TAG, quality assurance and appeals. These will be covered in subsequent guidance *only* in the event of the government deciding that exams cannot run.

There are some similarities to the contingency process for 2021 but in particular the approach has key differences relating to two themes:

- Strengthening controls, such as exam-like conditions
- Taking a more proportionate approach in order to better mitigate workload risks



Key points

Timing and number of assessment points

The guidance suggests three assessment points may be a 'sensible approach', such as an assessment *"in each of the:*

- *second half of the autumn term 2021*
- *spring term of 2022, and*
- *first half of the summer term 2022"*

While Ofqual's example seems to indicate that schools might choose to have three assessment points, this is not a requirement. There is some flexibility for schools to work with the current plans they have in place, which may be, for example, to hold two substantial 'mock' series rather than three smaller assessment activities. Equally, a school might choose to space out assessments by subject so that students are not sitting assessments for all their subjects within a short time frame. This seems permissible within what is specified in the guidance.

You will want to consider the plans you already have in place, the balance of non-examined assessment (NEA) where applicable, the appropriate spacing between assessments, and also remember the government's position currently is that exams will still take place; therefore, you should consider how these assessment opportunities will work alongside teaching and learning and students' preparation for exams in the summer.

In planning your approach you should also consider the controls you are able to put in place for each assessment (the guidance indicates a preference for 'exam-like conditions wherever possible' - see below), and the overall duration of assessments (see below).

Exam-like conditions

There is an expectation that assessments are taken in *'exam-like conditions wherever possible.'* This is strengthened compared to the wording for TAGs in 2021. The guidance for 2022 says:

"For example students:

- *should not know the questions in the assessment beforehand*
- *should work independently and without assistance (other than as required for a reasonable adjustment)*



- *should not have access to books or revision notes and the assessment should be timed and supervised***

This section of the guidance in particular is worth noting:

“Wherever possible, a centre must either assess all of its students who are taking a particular qualification using the same material at the same time, or using different materials at different times.”

In effect, this encourages you towards whole-cohort contemporaneous exams/assessments where possible. Where this is not possible you will need to ensure each sitting does different questions (that cover the same content and question style), so that individual students are not advantaged/disadvantaged. But it does not say that assessments must be held in an exam hall.

It may be that your students have already undertaken assessments you intend to use as evidence for TAGs (if required), but which were not completed in such ‘exam-like’ conditions. The guidance says:

“Where assessments have already taken place under different conditions in this academic year, centres should exercise their judgement over whether it would be appropriate, and in the interests of their students, for evidence gathered from those assessments to contribute towards a TAG if needed. They should be prepared to explain the approach in their centre policies for TAGs if necessary. Centres will not be required to draw up centre policies unless exams are cancelled.”

*Please note, Ofqual says: *“Students taking GCSEs in maths, combined science and physics should have access in their assessments to the formulae and equation sheets that they will have in the summer exams, where assessments are taking place after these sheets are published.”* We understand exam boards will be publishing these formulae sheets by 12 November.

Total assessment time

The total assessment time should not normally exceed the time students would spend taking exams for the relevant qualification, plus any time spent on non-exam assessment. This is a significant point to note as it is, in part, intended to mitigate workload risks. Therefore, when planning your assessment points you’ll want to consider the overall amount of assessment: *“Teachers should guard against over-assessment and think about opportunities to schedule specific assessment opportunities which, taken together, would provide evidence from broadly the same proportion of the specification as would normally be covered in exams.”*



Other points to note

- Reasonable adjustments should be made for disabled students (see guidance).
- Where a GCSE, AS or A level includes non-exam assessment (NEA), such as a dance or music performance, teachers should support their students, wherever possible, to complete that assessment in line with arrangements announced by Ofqual for 2022.
- Assessments should be similar to full or parts of the exam papers they are preparing to take next summer. If TAGs later become required these would need to take into account if students hadn't studied particular topics they'd been assessed on, but for the purposes of sitting assessments at this stage Centres don't need to tailor papers to reflect this.
- Following publication of this guidance, students must be told '*sufficiently far in advance*' of each assessment point that it could be used as part of their TAG evidence if exams are cancelled. They should be told which parts of the content will be covered but should not be told the questions or be able to predict what they will be.
- There should not be resit opportunities.
- Centres should make the reasonable adjustments that will be made for disabled students taking exams in the summer and record this.
- Teachers should mark the assessments in line with published exam board mark schemes and guidance where appropriate. As per usual for mocks and assessments, teachers can tell students the indicative grades for each assessment but "*they should also be clear that the marking and grading have not been quality assured. Teachers must make it clear to their students that any grade used to indicate the level at which the student has performed is not a TAG.*"
- Centres should retain students' original work. Students can be given copies if needed.
- Teachers should follow JCQ's approach to special considerations where necessary.

Further reading:

- Ofqual [guidance](#) on contingency arrangements for GCSEs, AS and A levels in summer 2022. Please note this Ofqual guidance also features information on private candidates.
- DfE/Ofqual consultation on contingency arrangements – [outcome](#).
- JCQ has published an [FAQ](#) document. This also includes information on private candidates.
- Open [letters](#) from Ofqual to headteachers, students and private candidates.
- Guidance for contingencies in [VTQ](#) qualifications.



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Tel: 0115 917 0142

Email: admin@cstuk.org.uk

Address: Suite 10, Whiteley Mill
Offices, 39 Nottingham Road,
Stapleford, NG9 8AD



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