

Cancel AS and A Level exams within Wales for the summer of 2022

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Petition title: Cancel AS and A Level exams within Wales for the summer of 2022

I feel that exams within Wales should be cancelled for the summer of 2022 as the Covid 19 pandemic has meant that pupils teaching time has been affected on various amounts of different occasions during the school year. I also feel that if exams were to go ahead it would have dramatic effect on pupils' mental health and anxiety and at a time where teenager suicide is at its highest. I personally believe alongside hundreds of other pupils that exams should be cancelled for the summer of 2022.



1. Examinations in 2020

In March 2020, Kirsty Williams, then [Minister for Education](#), announced that the 2020 summer GCSE and A level exam series would not proceed. Learners were to be awarded a 'fair grade', 'drawing on the range of information available'. Learners grades were to be awarded on the basis of information that schools and colleges submitted to WJEC.

The initial plan was for those grades to be 'standardised' using WJEC standardisation models, approved by the regulator, Qualifications Wales. This approach was [changed on 12 August 2020](#). Those who were due to sit their A levels were automatically be awarded the same grade they achieved in their AS-Level, if it was higher than that calculated by WJEC. A further change was [announced on 17 August](#) and grades were awarded on the basis of the information that schools and colleges had submitted.

2. Examinations in 2021

On 10 November 2020, Kirsty Williams [announced](#) that there would be no end-of-year examinations in 2021. On [20 January 2021](#), she announced that learners would have their GCSE, AS and A level qualifications awarded through a **Centre Determined Grade** model, based on schools' and colleges' (centres) assessment of learners' work. This [Senedd Research article](#) provides further information.

3. Summer examination series 2022

Learners began sitting their A and AS levels on 16 May 2022.

In March 2021, [Qualifications Wales announced](#) that there would be exams in summer 2022. They confirmed this again on [5 January 2022](#) stating that any decision to cancel would be made by the Welsh Government.

Qualifications Wales said that the assessment requirements for WJEC GCSE, AS and A levels, Skills Challenge Certificate **qualifications would be adapted to recognise the impact of lost face-to-face teaching and learning time** during the pandemic.

The Welsh Government have said repeatedly that their intention is that exams go ahead this year. At the [Committee for the Scrutiny of the First Minister](#) (16

December 2021), the First Minister explained the reasons why the Welsh Government wanted exams to go ahead:

- **Parity with the rest of the UK** – for those applying for a university place outside Wales, the qualification should have equal status with learners in other jurisdictions who also plan to hold to hold exams this summer.
- **Equity** – using the system in place for summer 2021, the performance of young men from working-class backgrounds fell back.

Qualifications Wales published their [Equalities Analysis of General Qualifications in Summer 2021](#) in October 2021.

In October 2021, Qualifications Wales [announced their approach to grading](#). 2022 would be a transition year to reflect that it is a pandemic recovery period and learners' education has been disrupted. In 2022 they aim for exam results to reflect broadly a midway point between 2021 and 2019. In 2023 they will aim to return to results that are in line with those in pre-pandemic years. Qualifications Wales [wrote to schools and colleges recently \(13 May 2022\)](#) to confirm examination arrangements for this summer.

4. Welsh Government Action

On [15 December 2021 the Minister for Education and Welsh Language announced](#) funding of £24m to support learners impacted by the pandemic. Of this, £7.5m is to provide **extra support for learners in exam years**, with additional teaching time and learning resources - to help learners to develop their skills, knowledge and confidence, as well as supporting those who feel anxious about exams. The funding will be weighted towards schools with greater numbers of learners who receive free school meals. Over £7m will go towards supporting learners whose attendance has dropped during the pandemic. Dedicated support will be provided to support Year 11 pupils who have low attendance to complete their GCSEs or help them reach the next stage in their education or in starting a career, as well as support for pupils in other years. Funding will also be provided to support well-being and education for learners at Pupil Referrals Units.

In a [Cabinet Statement on 25 January 2022](#), the Minister for Education and Welsh Language said:

I wish to reiterate to learners, schools and colleges that exams and assessments this year will go ahead, unless the public health situation makes it impossible for them to physically run – which we do not

envisage. The intention to adjust grade boundaries to reflect disruption has already been set out. Adaptations to exam content have been put in place as well as prior notification of areas of examination, so that assessments are as fair as possible, and which will enable teachers to focus their time on the key areas for learning [...] I encourage all learners in exam years to talk to their schools and colleges about what additional support and flexibility might be available this year, to help them progress with confidence.

On 3 May 2022, the Welsh Government announced changes to the self-isolation rules for learners who are taking exams and who test positive for COVID-19. The advisory self-isolation period is now shorter for learners due to attend exams, than for others, provided they test negative.

In May 2022, the Joint Council on Qualifications published updated special consideration guidance. Special consideration is a post-examination adjustment to a learner's mark or grade. It is given to a learner who has temporarily experienced illness, injury or some other event outside of their control at the time of the assessment.

Awarding of a grade through the special consideration process can only be made where a learner is absent from an examination or non-examination assessment unit for an acceptable reason. A candidate who is self-isolating in line with the Welsh Government guidance at the time of the examination is considered to be absent from the examination for an acceptable reason.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.