

Teacher Assessed Grades for learners unable to sit November GCSE

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 24 Ionawr 2022
Petitions Committee | 24 January 2022

Reference: SR22/1626

Petition Number: P-06-1237

Petition title: Look at using Teacher Assessed Grades for learners unable to sit November GCSE exams as a result of a positive COVID test. Ensure fairer arrangements are in place for the May exams

Text of petition: My son in Year 11 had fully prepared to sit his GCSE Numeracy exams on 2nd and 4th of November. On October 31st he did a Lateral flow test as advised by the Welsh Government. This was positive, followed by a positive PCR test. This meant he could not sit his exams despite being fully prepared by the school for them at this time. He should not be - and neither should others who have Covid - be disadvantaged by the pandemic. They have had to work so hard to get to this point.

E-mails from exam board and Welsh Government not being supportive at all.



1. Summer 2021 Examinations

On 10 November 2020, Kirsty Williams, then Minister for Education, 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. This meant that grades would be determined by schools and colleges (centres) based on their assessment of learners' work. Centres used a range of evidence, including non-exam assessments, mock exams and classwork, to judge a pupil's "demonstrated attainment" and award them an appropriate grade.

2. November examinations

GCSE examinations in November 2021 proceeded as usual pre-pandemic. November exams are generally taken by those who are resitting GCSEs in order to obtain a better grade. There are also 'early entry' candidates who may take some exams before the end of the school year. These candidates have an opportunity to sit the exam again in the summer examination series.

A limited number of subjects are available in the November series compared to the summer series. In November 2021, reformed GCSEs in Mathematics, Mathematics – Numeracy, English Language and Welsh Language were taken by learners in Wales.

3. Summer 2022

In March 2021, Qualifications Wales announced that there would be exams in summer 2022. They said that the assessment requirements for WJEC GCSE, AS and A levels, Skills Challenge Certificate qualifications would be adapted to reduce the impact of lost face-to-face teaching and learning time during the pandemic. Qualifications Wales have also said that if there are further substantial periods of disruption that results in the cancellation of future exam series, contingency arrangements will be put in place.

4. Students who are ill on the day of an exam

The Joint Council for Qualifications (a membership organisation comprising the eight largest providers of qualifications in the UK) have published a guide to the

special consideration process (September 2020). Special consideration is a post-examination adjustment to a candidate's mark or grade. This is to reflect temporary illness, temporary injury or some other event outside of the candidate's control at the time of the assessment. It is applied when the issue or event has had, or is reasonably likely to have had, a material effect on a candidate's ability to take an assessment or demonstrate their normal level of attainment in an assessment.

The Minister's letter states that no specific contingency arrangements (such as the use of centre determined grades, which the petition calls for) were put in place in the event that learners could not sit their scheduled exams in November due to COVID-related reasons. The Minister says that to expect schools to do this would have disproportionately affected the teaching and learning time available. He also pointed to the fact that pupils due to take their exams early in November have another opportunity to taken them in the summer.

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