

## **Education Minister Kirsty Williams has today (Tuesday 10 November) confirmed Wales' approach for qualifications in 2021 and her decision that there will be no end of year exams for learners taking GCSEs, AS levels or A levels**

The Minister outlined:

- that in place of exams, the Welsh Government intended to work with schools and colleges to take forward teacher-managed assessments
- that this should include assessments that will be externally set and marked but delivered within a classroom environment under teacher supervision
- her expectation this work will form the basis for centre-based outcomes which will be linked to an agreed national approach to provide consistency across Wales

The announcement has been made after considering detailed advice published by Qualifications Wales on the delivery options available as well as the interim findings of an independent review into this year's exams process.

The Minister also discussed options with a range of people including learners and their families, headteachers, college leaders, the Children's Commissioner and universities across the UK.

Confirming her policy decision, Education Minister Kirsty Williams said:

The well-being of learners and ensuring fairness across the system is central in our decision making process.

In line with the recommendations of both Qualifications Wales and the Independent Review, there will be no exams for GCSE or AS level learners next year. A-level students will also not be required to sit exams.

We remain optimistic that the public health situation will improve, but the primary reason for my decision is down to fairness; the time learners will spend in schools and colleges will vary hugely and, in this situation, it is impossible to guarantee a level playing field for exams to take place.

We have consulted with universities across the UK and they have confirmed that they are used to accepting many different types of qualifications.

They expect a transparent and robust approach which provides evidence of a learner's knowledge and ability.

Our intended approach does just that, as it is designed to maximise the time for teaching and learning.

Cancelling exams provides time for teaching and learning to continue throughout the summer term, to build the knowledge, skills and confidence in our learners to progress in whatever they decide to do next.

The Minister said Welsh Government would work with teachers to take forward teacher-managed assessments and that they should include assessments that will be externally set and marked, but delivered within a classroom environment under teacher supervision.

Teachers would have flexibility when it is best to undertake them, in the context of results timelines

The Minister said:

The full approach to this will be developed by school and college leaders, supported by Welsh Government and advised by Qualifications Wales and WJEC.

My policy intention is that this will form the basis for centre-based outcomes which will be linked to an agreed national approach to provide consistency across Wales to assure universities and colleges of our approach.

This work will be completed in the autumn term to provide time for implementation from January and we envisage that the first assessment activities will not commence until the latter half of the spring term.

The Minister also reiterated that a £50 million package of support has been put in place to support learners in exam years to develop the skills and knowledge they need to confidently progress.

The Minister added:

This remains a highly challenging year and what I have announced today sets a course which removes pressures from learners and provides clear time for teaching and learning.

I now look to our schools, colleges, qualifications bodies, and the wider education sector to work cooperatively and collaboratively through the year to support our learners and enable them to progress with confidence.

The situation for Vocational Qualifications is more complex and will require extra work.

The Minister confirmed Welsh Government officials would continue to support Qualifications Wales as they work closely with other regulators to ensure a 'pragmatic approach that works in learners' interests and gives them clarity about the way forward.'

<https://gov.wales/wales-approach-qualifications-2021-confirmed-education-minister-kirsty-williams>

10<sup>th</sup> November 2021