



Correspondence

# Letter to schools and colleges April 2024

Published 18 April 2024

---

**Applies to England**

Contents

Preparing for summer exams and assessments

Grading arrangements in 2024: GCSEs, AS and A levels

Grading arrangements in 2024: Vocational and Technical Qualifications taken alongside GCSEs and A levels

Resources to support schools and colleges in preparing students for assessments

Results days and next steps



© Crown copyright 2024

This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated. To view this licence, visit [nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3](https://nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3) or write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gov.uk).

Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

This publication is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/letter-to-schools-and-colleges-april-2024/letter-to-schools-and-colleges-april-2024>

I would like to take the opportunity to introduce myself. I became Chief Regulator in January 2024, having been Chair of Ofqual for 3 years and serving as a senior leader in schools for over 2 decades.

I know how much you and your colleagues do to support the smooth running of exams and assessments, and I would like to thank you for this. Qualifications are a vital passport to future pathways for young people, and I know students value the opportunity to sit exams and assessments that allow them to show what they know, understand and can do.

## Preparing for summer exams and assessments

Schools and colleges have a pivotal role in maintaining the security and integrity of exams and assessments, including managing the safe storage and distribution of exam materials and ensuring students understand the rules when sitting assessments. Senior leaders' support for the vital role of exams officers is appreciated.

I know that cyber security is important to you, given the threat it can pose to the safe delivery of exams. Schools and colleges have a crucial role to play in cyber security to protect your students and all should meet the [Department for Education's cyber security standards](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/meeting-digital-and-technology-standards-in-schools-and-colleges/cyber-security-standards-for-schools-and-colleges) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/meeting-digital-and-technology-standards-in-schools-and-colleges/cyber-security-standards-for-schools-and-colleges>). JCQ has also provided [guidance for schools and colleges on cyber security](https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Guidance-for-centres-on-cyber-security_23_FINAL.pdf) ([https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Guidance-for-centres-on-cyber-security\\_23\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Guidance-for-centres-on-cyber-security_23_FINAL.pdf)).

I would also encourage you, before the exam series begins, to reflect on your contingency plans and consider practical arrangements, such as how you would access information on access arrangements and seating plans should your systems go down.

## Grading arrangements in 2024: GCSEs, AS and A levels

In summer 2023, grading returned to normal for GCSEs, AS and A levels after disruption caused by the pandemic, and normal arrangements will now continue for future years. This means students' work is marked anonymously by expert examiners. Grade boundaries are set only after

students have taken their assessments and marking is nearly complete. It is important to remember that grade boundaries typically change each year to reflect any differences in the demand of the assessments.

Each student gets a grade based on their own individual performance in their assessments. There is no pre-determined quota of grades.

When preparing students for assessments this summer, for example when providing feedback or indicative grades, schools and colleges should do so in light of the standard of work required in 2023.

National results, and results for individual subjects, vary a little each year due to changes in the cohort of students taking particular qualifications and based on how students perform in their exams and assessments. We anticipate outcomes in summer 2024 will be similar to those in summer 2023 with variations in outcomes likely similar to those typically seen in previous years.

You will also be aware that students will be provided with a formulae sheet for GCSE mathematics and an enhanced selection of equations for GCSE physics and combined science. The Department for Education has confirmed that this arrangement is in place for 2024 only and will not continue beyond this.

## **Grading arrangements in 2024: Vocational and Technical Qualifications taken alongside GCSEs and A levels**

Grading arrangements for Level 3 Vocational and Technical Qualifications (VTQs), such as Applied Generals and Tech Levels, will continue as normal in 2024 and for future years.

Technical Awards are new Level 1/2 vocational qualifications taken by 14–16 year-olds alongside GCSEs. They will be issued to students for the first time this year. These qualifications have a terminal rule, which means that the exam component must be the last assessment that is taken before certificating. Non-exam assessment (NEA) must be completed before the exam. If you are unsure about the arrangements, please speak to your awarding organisation.

We have asked awarding organisations to consider accepting a slightly weaker level of performance when setting grade boundaries for new Technical Awards, to reflect the fact that teachers and students are less

familiar with the assessments. This is the approach we have taken in the past with other new qualifications.

For the same reason, we have also asked awarding organisations to award Technical Qualifications within T Levels generously in the first years of awards.

This year, awarding organisations will operate a term-time checkpoint for Level 1/2, Level 2 and Level 3 VTQs used for progression and taken alongside or in place of A levels and GCSEs, to confirm which students are expecting a result in August. The checkpoint is in place to ensure awarding organisations have the information they need to deliver results on time.

Our [VTQ Information Hub \(https://www.gov.uk/guidance/vtq-information-hub-2023-to-2024-key-dates-and-deadlines\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/vtq-information-hub-2023-to-2024-key-dates-and-deadlines) brings together key dates and deadlines in one place to help you and your exams officers prepare.

Awarding organisations will release results for Level 1/2, Level 2 and Level 3 VTQs used for progression to schools and colleges in advance of results days.

## Resources to support schools and colleges in preparing students for assessments

Ofqual has produced resources to support you in preparing your students for their exams and assessments. This includes our [2024 Student Guide \(https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofqual-student-guide-2024/ofqual-student-guide-2024\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofqual-student-guide-2024/ofqual-student-guide-2024) and [2024 Guide for Schools and Colleges \(https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofqual-guide-for-schools-and-colleges-2024/ofqual-guide-for-schools-and-colleges-2024\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofqual-guide-for-schools-and-colleges-2024/ofqual-guide-for-schools-and-colleges-2024), which answers some of the main questions that we are asked by schools and colleges. You may also wish to sign up for Ofqual's [rolling update \(https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ofqual-rolling-update\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ofqual-rolling-update) on gov.uk to keep up to date with relevant news.

## Results days and next steps

As we head into the summer series, I know many of you will be turning your minds to results days on 15 and 22 August, and to supporting your students in their next steps.

You will already know that where students do not meet their predicted grades, this may be because they are often set to be 'aspirational yet

achievable' in line with UCAS guidance. It may be helpful for you to be aware, when advising students, that in 2023 only 17% of UK 18-year-old UCAS applicants taking 3 or more A levels achieved or exceeded their predicted grades, yet 85% were accepted to a higher education place.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish your students well in their upcoming exams and assessments.

Sir Ian Bauckham CBE  
Chief Regulator

---

**OG**

All content is available under the [Open Government Licence v3.0](#), except where otherwise stated



© Crown copyright