



COVID-19
GCSE AND A LEVEL
FREQUENTLY ASKED
QUESTIONS

Wiltshire Council

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Guidance for teachers, students, parents and carers – DfE / Ofqual guidance

Guidance: cancellation of GCSEs, AS and A levels in 2020 – DfE site with other questions and answers for students and parents

● How will GCSEs, AS and A Level grades be awarded this summer?

The Secretary of State for Education announced in March the summer 2020 GCSE, AS and A level exam series would be cancelled in order to help fight the spread of the Coronavirus. Students due to sit exams would be awarded the grade they would have been most likely to achieve had exams gone ahead.

The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual), which oversees the exam boards, has now released details about the process which will be followed to award grades for GCSEs, AS and A Levels this summer. Ofqual has published two useful documents which explain this process to parents and students. These can be accessed by clicking on the links below.

Ofqual, the exam boards, schools and colleges are all committed to ensuring that the process of awarding grades this summer is fair and that students will not be disadvantaged in their progress to sixth form, college, university, apprenticeships, training or work because of these unprecedented conditions.

● Did exams need to be cancelled?

From Friday 20 March, all educational settings were closed to everyone except the children of critical workers and vulnerable children. The coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak is having a significant impact on the education system, and the country. Therefore, exams have been cancelled to give pupils, parents, and teachers certainty, and enable schools and colleges to focus on supporting vulnerable children and the children of key workers.

● How will schools be deciding upon the grades being submitted?

- Teachers know their students well and will use a range of information to make sure the school assessed grade that is submitted to the exam board in each subject best reflects the most likely grade a student would have achieved if teaching, learning and exams had happened as planned.

- This will include performance in mock exams, but students should not worry if they were not happy with their mock exam results because teachers will also use classwork, homework, end of unit tests and any non-exam assessment or coursework that students might have done.

- It should also be noted that grades submitted to the exam boards will not necessarily be the same as the expected grades on a student's latest progress report or their UCAS predicted grades because further information about a student's progress is likely to have been collected since these grades were published.

- Schools are not required to set additional mock exams or homework to provide evidence to support the school assessed grade and students won't be disadvantaged if they were not set, or were unable to complete, any work given out after schools were closed.

● Can I know the grades I am currently submitted by my school?

From Ofqual's documents, schools have been instructed that the grades submitted to the exam boards are confidential. Therefore, please don't ask your child's teachers or anyone else at school to tell you the grades they will send to the exam boards or where your child has been placed in the rank order of students as they will not be allowed to share this information with you.

● Is this the same as the predicted grades I received in my GCSE / A level course?

Not necessarily. It is important that schools and colleges consider the full range of available evidence when they grade students - including any non-exam assessment

completed by 20 March; the results of any homework assignments or mock exams; and any other records of student performance over the course of study. Ofqual is also asking schools and colleges to provide a rank order of students within each grade. This is because the statistical standardisation process will need more granular information than the grade alone.

We have provided clear guidance to schools and colleges on the grading and rank ordering process to help staff in different schools and colleges take a common approach to assessing their students.

● What about BTECs?

No information is available at this present time.

● Is the submitted grade the grade I will receive in August?

Not necessarily. This information provided by schools will allow Ofqual, with exam boards, to standardise grades across schools and colleges, to make sure that, as far as possible, results are fair and that students are not advantaged or disadvantaged because their schools or colleges are more generous or harsh than others when making those judgements. That means the final grade you get could be different from the one your school or college sends to the exam board.

● Can I know the assessment grades of my current coursework?

No. This will be used as part of the evidence teachers use to decide upon the submitted grade and as such can not now be shared with parents or students. No school should be sharing this from this point forwards.

Any completed coursework will be taken into consideration of the grade that your setting awards you. Your school or college is not required to set additional mock exams or homework for your centre assessment grade, and you won't be disadvantaged if you were not set, or were unable to complete, any work given out after schools were closed.

However, for your own personal gratification, you may well want to complete

any outstanding coursework, just to finish things off properly. Other added benefits of doing this, will include an opportunity to continue to hone your skills in readiness for undertaking your A level course.

● What if I am unhappy with the calculated grade I receive on results day?

Ofqual and the exam boards are working to ensure that candidates are awarded a fair grade that recognises the work they have put in. If an A level, AS level or GCSE student does not believe the correct process has been followed in their case, they will have access to a right of appeal on that basis. Ofqual has **consulted on the arrangements for these appeals** and will announce next steps shortly. In addition, if a student does not feel their grade reflects their performance, they will have the opportunity to take an exam in the autumn. Students will also have the option to take their exams in summer 2021, in line with usual practice.

● How will I get support for thinking about my next steps for autumn term?

This will depend on where you intend to go next. You will be supported in this by your current school and you will need to talk to your school's career guidance officer.

● What careers help will be available to me in my school?

Every school should have links on their website which details the planned careers programmes for the academic year. It should also provide contact details for who is responsible for careers information in the school. This is often the Career Leader; however, this will vary depending on the individual set up of careers provision, from school to school.

● Are apprenticeships continuing?

Yes, apprenticeships will continue to be delivered on a national basis and new vacancies are still being advertised. Further information can be found at:

- Find an Apprenticeship
www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship
- Amazing Apprenticeships
www.amazingapprenticeships.com

● I haven't decided what I want to do in September, how can I find out when I can't visit colleges?

All colleges are continuing to work in a virtual format and information on applications and enrolment can be found on each college's individual website. The links below are provided to help you with deciding on your next steps.

- Wiltshire College and University Centre:
www.wiltshire.ac.uk
- New College, Swindon
www.newcollege.ac.uk
- Swindon College
www.swindon.ac.uk/home
- Cirencester College
www.cirencester.ac.uk
- Bath College
www.bathcollege.ac.uk
- Andover College
www.andover.ac.uk

MORE INFORMATION

Additionally, the links below may be helpful in the decision-making process:

UCAS

University Virtual Tours
ucas.com/undergraduate/virtual-tours

University Virtual Open Events
ucas.com/virtual-and-digital/open-day

Information on the impact of COVID-19 on progression
www.ucas.com/coronavirus-updates

Information on sixth form, college, and apprenticeships
www.ucas.com/further-education

Careerpilot

Careers information and tools for 11-19-year olds
www.careerpilot.org.uk

Adviza

www.adviza.org.uk/young-person

The National Careers Service

Accessible to anyone aged 13+ and living in England. Call **0800 100 900** or visit
www.nationalcareers.service.gov.uk

Work Wiltshire

www.workwiltshire.co.uk

BBC Bitesize

Careers – www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/careers

YEAR 11 TO COLLEGE TRANSITION PLAN 2020

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- Bath College
- Cirencester College
- New College, Swindon
- Swindon College
- Wiltshire College

* NB: this information was correct at the date of publication (1 May 2020) and may change over time. Please refer to each individual college website for further information and updates. *

ANDOVER COLLEGE

Applications and interviews

The college is still accessible and functioning including answering questions, interviewing and accepting online applications
www.andover.ac.uk/apply

Applications are still being processed for college courses and apprenticeships. The college is also contactable for any Year 11 applicant who wishes to discuss their application and any student who wishes to apply via this contact email coursesandover@sparsholt.ac.uk

Where applicants have applied but not yet received an offer (including new applications), as they are received, the college will be in touch for an interview – which will be conducted by telephone.

Enrolment

This is still in the planning stages and applicants will be contacted as soon as the details are confirmed.

Apprenticeships

Applications are still being processed for college courses and apprenticeships.

Events/open days

No more events planned for this academic year.

Experience and transition days

Applicant Welcome Days: applicants will be contacted in order to inform them as to how they can access virtual Applicant Welcome Activities for the subjects/courses that they have applied for.

Applicant Welcome Activities will include videos, quizzes, information and reading in order to prepare students for the commencement of their studies in September. Year 11 applicants are being contacted



directly regarding this and materials will also be available to other Year 11s very soon.

College website – www.andover.ac.uk

Contact details – coursesandover@sparsholt.ac.uk

BATH COLLEGE

Applications and interviews

From receiving an application, potential students are offered a conditional place on a course dependant on their predicted grades and the college are then hoping to invite these students in over the summer to meet the rest of their class where they will have an experience day.

Enrolment

The college is hoping to invite students in to enrol but as this may not be possible they are also looking at enrolments online.

Events/open days

A virtual open day will be held on 14 May 2020

This will give students and parents an opportunity to talk to staff about courses that they are interested in plus bursary eligibility and travel queries and much more.

Experience and transition days

The college is then hoping to invite these students in over the summer to meet the rest of their class where they will have an experience day.

College website – www.bathcollege.ac.uk

Contact details – info@bathcollege.ac.uk

CIRENCESTER COLLEGE

Applications and interviews

The application process is still open and all students should apply via the website.

The college is currently conducting Information and Guidance meetings by telephone and these can be arranged at a time to suit the young person. Any student who would like to speak with one of the team about their application should contact studentjourneyteam@cirencester.ac.uk

Enrolment

The college is aiming for the traditional enrolment process to take place in August, although this will depend on government guidance. They are continuing to keep in touch with prospective students on a weekly basis and in May will start to send through suggested work and reading lists across the different subject areas.

Events/open days

An open evening is scheduled for Thursday 25 June between 5pm – 8pm.

Currently planned as on-site, however due to the current situation this may have to become an online/remote event.

Further updates will be made by contacting prospective students, feeder schools and will be advertised in the press, online and on social media.

Experience and transition days

Choices Days are held at the beginning of July and currently the college is hoping that these will still take place: subject to government guidance. However, an alternate online option may be provided.

If students or parents have any questions they should in the first instance email student.journeyteam@cirencester.ac.uk and questions will be forwarded to the relevant department. All our staff are working remotely and are able to help.

College website – www.cirencester.ac.uk

Contact details – student.journeyteam@cirencester.ac.uk

NEW COLLEGE

Applications and interviews

Students should apply as normal online at www.newcollege.ac.uk. They will be contacted very quickly and interviews will be conducted by telephone.

Enrolment

Enrolment period is planned to take place in mid-late August as normal.

If students do not quite achieve the grades needed for the Level 3/A Level course planned, they will be offered an alternative place. At August Enrolment, a lecturer will discuss planned learning programmes and ensure that the student is placed on the right course.

Launch of “Kick Start to College” programme – 1 May.

A dedicated website containing transition and preparation to study materials for all applicants and any Year 11s. It covers A Levels/Level 3 Vocational courses as well as GCSEs and Level 2 Vocational courses. Year 11 applicants and contacts will be contacted by email.

Apprenticeships

The college would encourage any Year 11 student who is interested in apprenticeships to visit the Virtual Open Event on 21 May. Alternatively, they can email the team via email apprenticeships@newcollege.ac.uk.

Once someone has registered their interest with the college, they plan to work with them to ensure they are as ready as possible to start applying to any vacancies that arise. The college may also run some specific online apprenticeships activity from June onwards so please keep an eye on their website at www.newcollege.ac.uk.



Events/open days

The college is running two virtual open events during the remainder of this academic year. These will contain video content on courses and aspects of student life, FAQ and a live chat facility. The dates are:

- Thursday 21 May, 10am to 6pm, with live chat between 4-6pm
- Thursday 2 July – times to be confirmed

Year 11s can register to attend via www.newcollege.ac.uk. Existing Year 11 applicants have been emailed. Year 11 applicants/contacts and local school career contacts will also be receiving a pdf flyer.

Experience and transition days

The planned two June Welcome Days scheduled for the end of June have been cancelled. The college will be contacting Year 11 applicants in June to firm up student intentions and course choices and provide further information, advice and guidance if necessary. This will be done via email/phone and some online activity.

Daytime College Experience and Twilight College Experience events are both cancelled. The college envisages that schools will not want to release Year 11s during the autumn for days at a time, so they plan to hold a series of after school Twilight College Experience sessions on dates in October and November (dates to be confirmed). The college hopes to provide buses for partner schools to transport cohorts to college and to provide refreshments.

College website – www.newcollege.ac.uk

Contact details – info@newcollege.ac.uk

SWINDON COLLEGE

Interviews

Interviews are continuing to take place. New applications are still being taken and curriculum teams will contact the applicant by phone for interview.

Offers are being made via Student Services team by email.

Enrolment

Students will be invited in to undertake the normal enrolment processes in August after the GCSE results etc. have been published. The Student Services team will keep in touch with applicants during the lead up period.

Apprenticeships

Applications are still being processed for apprenticeships and the team are staying in touch with applicants. However, if an apprenticeship route is not available in the new academic year, the student will be offered a similar vocational course in the interim.

Events/open days

A Virtual Open Event is planned for 18 May, this will include the opportunity for students to explore college-based and apprenticeship routes.

Experience and transition days

College Experience Days are planned for July, however in case this is not possible at that point, virtual workshops and learning sessions are being planned for new students to participate in.

Phone lines have been made available on Mondays and Fridays where advice from the Careers Team or Student Services team can be made available by contacting Student Services on **01793 498106** or by emailing studentservices@swindon.ac.uk

Schools liaison team can also provide support directly to school Career Leaders.

College website – swindon.ac.uk/home

Contact details – Via online **contact us form** or **01793 491 591**

WILTSHIRE COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY CENTRE

Interviews

Applicants are being offered a conditional place on their chosen course if they meet the course entry criteria. No interviews are taking place during the closure period.

Screening of applications is taking place as usual to ensure that an applicant's predicted grades give them a chance of meeting the entry criteria and if not, offering a place on the most appropriate level for them.

Enrolment

This will follow the usual enrolment process in late August. Students will be invited in to enrol, bringing with them GCSE results slips/certificates and meeting the curriculum teams who ensure that they have met the entry criteria for the course and have an interview if required.

For those who have not previously applied, an interview with a lecturer will be undertaken at this point.

Apprenticeships

Still enrolling apprentice starts remotely and deliver remotely in most cases.

Recruitment activity for apprenticeships is currently quieter, however, there are some employers recruiting for immediate starts.

Experience and transition days

No updates at this point.

College website – www.wiltshire.ac.uk

Contact details – info@wiltshire.ac.uk or **01225 350035**

