

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE MINISTER



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21 June 2022

Dear Parents, Guardians and Students,

CCEA QUALIFICATIONS 2022/23: SUPPORT FOR LEARNERS

As the end of another challenging academic year approaches, I am writing to provide details of the planned changes to qualifications in the next academic year.

I am mindful of the need to consider our young people's mental health and well-being; the many difficulties they have faced; and the significant disruption to their learning during three successive academic years.

I continue to be inspired by the resilience and determination our young people have demonstrated throughout the past two and a half years. I am also immensely proud of our teachers and school leaders who have continued to support their pupils in the face of ongoing challenges. Given those ongoing challenges, I recognise that there cannot simply be a return to business as usual next year and there is a need to provide continued support for our young people.

I have, therefore, decided that in Summer 2023 across all CCEA GCSE, AS and A Level qualifications young people will be provided with Advance Information that will set out the focus and topics that will form the content of their examinations. This is intended to help learners and schools prioritise revision and preparation. It will provide important support for learners preparing for exams and help increase their confidence and focus their revision.

This approach is being adopted by both Scotland and Wales. I am, therefore, confident that it will provide support for learners without damaging the credibility or portability of the qualifications.

Qualifications Support Programme

I do not believe it is enough to simply make adaptations to qualifications. Pupils will also need additional support with their learning.

During the last academic year, my Department provided significant additional resources and funding to support students preparing for Summer 2022 examinations. This included:

- the Engage GCSE Maths Programme to provide one-to-one and small group tuition in GCSE Maths;
- specialist GCSE Maths revision resources;
- CCEA GCSE revision eBooks for Year 12 pupils across a wide range of subjects; and
- funding for Easter Revision Schemes.

I recognise the importance of continuing to provide similar support for students and schools next year. I can therefore confirm that, in the coming year I will invest £2 million in a Qualification Support Programme across all post primary schools. Funding will be provided on per capita basis of approximately £80 for each Year 12 enrolment.

Schools will have the freedom to deploy this funding flexibly to support pupils preparing for exams in 2023. This could include revision resources, tuition, and holiday revision schemes. The funding is not limited to use with Year 12 and can also be used to support pupils in other examinations year groups.

Winter GCSE Series

Modular exams for GCSE English and Maths will again be brought forward from January 2023 to late November/early December 2022 to mitigate the risk of a spike in infections over the Christmas period impacting on exams.

Contingency Arrangements

While we hope that we will continue to progress towards more normal arrangements, I am nonetheless conscious that the public health situation remains uncertain. CCEA will, therefore, again be in a position to respond quickly to any significant deterioration in the public health context.

Exams will only be cancelled as an absolute last resort. In this event, CCEA will again have in place arrangements so that qualifications can be awarded using the Centre Determined Grade process.

In conclusion, I would stress that fairness to pupils is my priority, and will continue to be at the forefront of every decision. I hope the measures I have announced today will provide not only certainty about the arrangements for qualifications in the next

academic year, but will enable our young people to feel supported and look forward to next year with a degree of confidence.

I would like to extend my best wishes to you and your family and hope our young people are able to enjoy a restful summer break.

Yours faithfully,

Michelle McIlveen

Michelle McIlveen MLA
Minister of Education