

Simon Lebus
Interim Chief Regulator
Ofqual
Earlsdon Park
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CV1 3BH

27 January 2021

Dear Mr Lebus

Ofqual consultations on general and vocational/technical qualifications in summer 2021

I am writing regarding the two consultations Ofqual published on proposals for A level and GCSE assessments and vocational technical qualifications in light of the Secretary of State for Education's decision to cancel exams in summer 2021 and award qualifications informed by teacher assessments.

As Chief Executive of MillionPlus, I represent a wide spectrum of modern universities across England, in all parts of the country. These universities recruit students with a range of level 3 qualifications, often with a blend of A levels and vocational or applied general qualifications.

I would like to raise two principal concerns and a further request for cooperation between agencies in the way in which Ofqual's proposals may be implemented.

My initial concern is a practical one that reflects on whether the proposals will equip students with the skills and knowledge needed for them to progress on to higher education, should they wish to do so. The Ofqual proposals suggest that assessments would take place by early June at the latest, with results available to schools and students in early July. While I can see a logic to this, in part to enable appeals to be settled as soon as possible, I would question whether reducing, to an even greater degree than the effect of the pandemic, the amount of teaching and learning time available to students undertaking level 3 exams. These students are the same students who lost a significant amount of face-to-face teaching time in summer 2020. It may be wiser to ensure students have the maximum amount of teaching and learning time in order to be fully prepared for moving on to higher education or into work.

My second concern relates to the release of results. As stated above, modern universities recruit a significant number of students who study other level 3 qualifications, or blend A levels with qualifications such as BTECS. Releasing A levels in early July but informing students studying other level 3 qualifications at a later date would be problematic. Last year, the results days for these qualifications differed and this caused some issues as BTEC results were delayed by over a week.

I would urge Ofqual to ensure that results days are the same of all qualifications, while acknowledging that some students will know about some qualifications results earlier than this through possible provisional grades for some qualifications. There is a risk that a provisional release plan based on A levels alone will advantage universities that only/primarily recruit students holding those qualifications.

Finally, I would ask that Ofqual and the awarding organisations work closely with UCAS and universities themselves on ensuring a smooth operation of clearing this summer.

The release of provisional awards to candidates is an unprecedented step, though one dictated by exceptional events. It will be important that qualification candidates and university applicants have an orderly

experience of clearing, with the release of provisional results not causing a disruption to the university application process for those in the clearing system.

Please do not hesitate to contact me about any of the points raised in this letter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Greg Walker', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dr Greg Walker
Chief Executive