



Pearson

Policy Watch

Your guide to what's happening in the world of education



The week in a nutshell

Ministers in Westminster made their move on **exams in England, delaying them for three weeks**, following last week's news of the cancellation of National 5 exams (GCSE equivalent) in Scotland. The government's message is clear, exams are the "best and fairest form of assessment". Details will be developed over the coming weeks. On the skills front, the government announced the end of the **National Retraining Scheme**. It will be integrated into the National Skills Fund (consultation expected soon) following a pilot programme and an aim to "reduce complexity" in the skills system. We also saw the publication of the latest **Employer Skills Survey**, thought it came with the warning that results reflect a very different world to today. The pandemic has thrust **digital learning** to the forefront of the education agenda and this week the **OfS** outlined its work to maintain quality in this area. The **IPPR** has put out a report making recommendations around the government's digital strategy in schools. And our very own **Sharon Hague** has written about online learning as part of a blog on the new normal in schools. Our [new policy blog hub](#) also include contributions from **Cindy Rampersaud** on key workers and **Gary Gates** on digital in higher education.

Top stories

The Government has laid out its [plan](#) for the 2021 summer exam series, in England.

- Most AS, A Levels and GCSEs will take place three weeks later than usual to "address the disruption caused by the pandemic." The 2021 summer exam series will run from 7th June until the 2nd July 2021.
- Gavin Williamson has [written to Ofqual](#) to ask the regulator to work closely with him, school and further education leaders, exam boards, unions and the higher education sector to develop these arrangements.
- More detail will be published later in the Autumn.
- It is expected that most vocational and technical qualifications that are taken alongside GCSEs, AS and A-Levels will align to the new 2021 timetable.
- Ofqual on [vocational qualification assessment in 2021](#) and [the delay to exams](#)
- **Stakeholder reaction:** [Labour](#); [NASUWT](#); [ASCL](#); [AoC](#); [LGA](#)

Minister updates The House of Commons on adult skills and the National Retraining Scheme

- Gillian Keegan provided a [statement](#) outlining the Government's action of integrating the National Retraining Scheme into the National Skills Fund. The ambition is to "reduce complexity in the adult skills landscape".
- The minister also said that wider plans for adult skills will be set out later in the Autumn.

Policy Watch will be taking a holiday next week and will return on Friday 6th November

Pearson events

On Wednesday 4th November 2020 the Education Policy Institute and Pearson are hosting a webinar on the future of blended learning and the digital divide: '*Narrowing the gap, tackling the digital divide: How can technology address the disadvantage gap during Covid and beyond?*'. virtual panel discussion chaired by Bethan Staton (Financial Times). We

will be hearing from Professor Becky Francis (Education Endowment Foundation); Sir Jon Coles (United Learning); Priya Lakhani (CENTURY Tech); Sharon Hague (Pearson); David Laws (EPI); and Christian Wakeford MP (Education Select Committee).



To find out more and to sign up [click here](#)

Pearson Policy Blogs

This week we launched [our new policy blog page](#), with pieces on:

- [Key workers and vocational education](#) by our Senior Vice President, BTEC and Apprenticeships, Cindy Rampersaud;
- [The new normal in education](#) by our Senior Vice President, Schools, Sharon Hague; and
- [Creating a level playing field for digital delivery in higher education](#) by our Senior Vice President, UK Higher Education, Dr. Gary Gates

Pearson tweet of the week



Other news

Parliamentary

- [Education questions \(12 October\)](#)
- [Gavin Williamson statement on delay to 2021 exams in England](#)
- [Gillian Keegan statement on adult skills and the National Retraining Scheme](#)
- [MPs debate exams and COVID-19 \(Petitions Committee\)](#)
- [Education Select Committee: Left behind white pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds evidence session](#)
- [Letter from Gavin Williamson to Education Select Committee: Update on DfE response to COVID-19](#)
- [Labour calls on Government to engage with schools on SEND guidance](#)
- [Green Party warns schools forgotten in new COVID-19 measures](#)
- [Lords debate on Social Mobility \(Baroness Bull\)](#)

COVID-19

- [Ofqual: Extraordinary regulatory framework: VTQ, Covid-19 Conditions and Requirements \(Updated\)](#)
- [DfE: State of the nation 2020: children and young people's wellbeing](#)
- [IPPR: The 'new normal': The future of education after Covid-19](#)
- [New study of COVID-19 infections in schools](#)

Schools

- [BACP: Fewer than half of state schools in England offer on-site counselling](#)

Further Education

- [National Retraining Scheme rolled into National Skills Fund](#)

Higher Education

- [OfS: Monitoring digital teaching quality at universities](#)

Wales

- [Independent report into the school funding system in Wales](#)

Northern Ireland

- [Education Minister announcement on COVID-19 school closures](#)
- [NASUWT on school closures](#)
- [CCEA announcement on 2021 exams](#)

Research, reports & blogs

- Department for Education – National Employer Skills Survey (2019 data)
- Council for Science and Technology - Specific Learning Difficulties: current understanding, support systems, and technology-led interventions

Consultation watch

New consultations

- Ofqual: Conditions and requirements for the assessment of MFL GCSEs in 2021. [Closes: 26th October](#)
- QAA: Quality Evaluation and Enhancement of UK transnational education. [Closes: 12th November](#)
- DfE: Regulating independent educational institutions. [Closes: 27th November](#)

Ongoing consultations

- Education Select Committee – call for evidence on “Home Education”. [Closes: 6th November](#)

What’s happening in Parliament next week

House of Commons

- **Tuesday 20 October:** Education Select Committee session – Accountability hearing. Rt Hon Nick Gibb MP
- **Tuesday 20 October:** Adjournment Debate - Remote education for pupils self-isolating during the covid-19 outbreak - Siobhain McDonagh MP
- **Tuesday 20 October:** Westminster Hall debate – Role of colleges in a skills-led recovery from COVID-19 - Peter Aldous MP
- **Wednesday 21 October:** Westminster Hall debate – Effect of the covid-19 outbreak on schools in disadvantaged areas of Kent - Gordon Henderson MP

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