



Pearson

Policy Watch

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



The week in a nutshell

This week's news has been dominated by the Scottish Government's decision to replace the National 5 exams (GCSE equivalent) with teacher assessment and coursework. This followed a rapid (independent review) by Professor Mark Priestley into the processes through which National Qualifications were awarded this year. Once again, Scottish policy makers have moved first on exams and it will be interesting to see the response of ministers in Westminster and their Welsh counterparts. The latter are waiting for the results of their own review of the summer, whilst Boris Johnson's government is adamant that exams will take place in England this summer. The long-term implications of these decisions could be significant as politicians (including the One Nation group of Conservatives and the Lord Baker) question the future of GCSEs and examinations at age 16.

Top stories

National 5 exams to be **cancelled** in Scotland for 2021 season.

- Scottish Education Secretary has described the possibility of a full exam season next summer as “too big a risk”. Instead, National 5 exams will be replaced with teacher assessments and coursework. (GCSE equivalent)
- Higher and Advanced Higher exams will go ahead as usual but will be “slightly later” in the year. Mr Swinney stated that there was a “contingency plan” in place in case these exams have to be cancelled.
- This follows a **'rapid review' by Prof. Mark Priestley**
- **Stakeholder response: EIS; NASUWT; NEU**

In his speech to the Conservative Conference, Prime Minister Boris Johnson made several references to education and skills, including to recent announcements around skills.

- Johnson also introduced a new policy to increase the per pupil funding of primary school children to £4,000, and secondary school to £5,000, as well as exploring the options for the introduction of 1-2-1 teaching schemes for pupils who are falling behind and those who have exceptional abilities.
- **Stakeholder response: Sutton Trust; NEU**

Education Secretary's 'fireside chat' at this year's Conservative Party Conference.

- Gavin Williamson's interview with his old politics teacher focussed on on the need for teachers to be politically neutral in the classroom.
- He also reiterated his ambition to scrap the 50% target for HE participation and to focus instead on FE and higher technical qualifications.

Teens diagnosed with depression show reduced educational achievement from primary school to GCSEs.

- **New research** from the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) highlights a substantial decline in educational attainment in year 11 for pupils diagnosed with depression during their school careers.

Pearson news

Wave 3 T Level announcement Following a competitive bidding process overseen by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education, we are pleased to have been awarded the contract to develop, deliver and award the T Level Technical Qualifications in Finance and Accounting. These will form the third wave of T Levels to be taught in classrooms across the country from September 2022. [Click here](#)



Pearson tweet of the week



Other news

Parliamentary

- Education Select Committee: Accountability hearing – Anne Longfield OBE, Children’s Commissioner for England
- Education Select Committee: Accountability hearing – Michelle Donelan, Universities Minister

Policy Eye

Week ending Friday 9 October 2020

- Westminster Hall debate: Covid-19: Financial Implications for Schools
- Westminster Hall debate: IHRA Definition of Antisemitism: Universities
- Lords hear a Statement on Lifetime Skills Guarantee and Post-16 Education

COVID-19

- ONS: Measuring education output in the summer of the pandemic
- Ofsted: School leaders determined pupils won't become 'the COVID generation'
- LGA: COBRA-style action needed to save 'lost generation' of young people
- Sport England: Exercise can support catch up on missed work (study with Sheffield Hallam University)
- VOICE: New remote education powers “heavy-handed”

Schools

- NIHR: Teens diagnosed with depression show reduction in achievement from primary school to GCSE
- DfE: School and trust governance investigative report

Further Education

- Further Education Commissioner intervention reports
- FETL: Signals for FE Futures, Annual Report

Higher Education

- OfS: New report published on mental health support for postgraduate research students
- Higher Education Commission: Arriving At Thriving: Learning from disabled students to ensure access for all
- OIS welcomes Higher Education Commission report on disabled students
- New report into higher education participation for Gypsy, Romany and Traveller Communities
- Unite: Welcomes University of Sheffield's pausing of face to face teaching

Scotland

- Rapid Review of National Qualifications experience 2020
- National Qualifications experience 2020 - rapid review: Scottish Government response
- EIS: Clarity on Exams is welcome, though overdue
- Deputy First Minister's speech on SQA Awards 2021

Wales

- [Statement by Kirsty Williams on OECD education review 2020](#)

Blogs & reports

- [One Nation group of Conservatives: Radical overhaul of education & GCSEs needed](#)
- [David Laws: Analysis of the Chancellor's 'Plan for Jobs' announcement](#)
- [George Eustace MP: A new vision for skills](#)
- [STEM Learning: The effectiveness of remote and blended teacher education](#)

What's happening in Parliament next week

House of Commons:

- **Monday 12 October:** Education questions to ministers
- **Monday 12 October:** Petitions Committee – MPs to debate two petitions: review the decision to use previous data to calculate exam grades & reduce curriculum content for students who will sit exams in 2021.
- **Tuesday 13 October:** Education Select Committee session - Left behind white pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds

House of Lords:

- **Thursday 15 October:** Report by the Social Mobility Commission 'The long shadow of deprivation' published on 15 September - Baroness Bull