



Pearson

Policy Watch

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



The week in a nutshell

On Monday the **Prime Minister** delivered a national address which introduced a third lockdown, closing schools across England (to all but key worker and vulnerable children) and cancelling A levels and GCSEs in the summer. Education Secretary, **Gavin Williamson**, gave a statement to MPs on Wednesday announcing the replacement of cancelled exams with teacher assessed grades. A consultation is expected to be published by **Ofqual** next week. Northern Ireland also announced the cancellation of summer exams. Wales and Scotland had done so some time ago. Vocational exams in January (not covered in the PM's address) are to continue but on Tuesday centres were given the choice to run exams with "*all students [being] able to progress fairly*". **Labour** called for the cancellation of these exams. **Pearson** has made clear that those unable to take BTEC exams this month will not be disadvantaged (details below).

This week's blog is by **Cindy Rampersaud**, who shares the findings of a public survey on learning needs for the future. For [more blogs click here](#).

Top story

The Education Secretary give a [statement](#) to the House of Commons regarding the implications of the new national lockdown measures on education.

- Gavin Williamson confirmed that GCSEs and A-Level exams would be cancelled this year with teacher assessed grades taking their place. There was confirmation that no algorithm would be used.
- He outlined the Government's approach to supporting online learning and paid tribute to the companies that have offered their services to ensure educational provision continues during school closures.
- Responding, Shadow Secretary of State, Kate Green **asked** for "necessary support" for teachers when awarding grades.
- Labour also **asked** the Government to cancel January's vocational exam series in line with the Association of Colleges' request.

The Chair of the Education Select Committee, Robert Halfon has described the Government's schools policy during the pandemic as a "huge shambles" following the decision to close schools.

- **Speaking** on the BBC's Woman's Hour, Halfon stated that "This has got to stop, the government has got to offer a consistent policy that doesn't change every couple of days, let alone weeks".
- He continued to state that hundreds of thousands of children were on the "wrong side of the digital divide" and that the issue was not just about children having laptops, tablets and internet access. The issue is "what is going to happen to them at home."

Pearson news & blogs

BTEC January assessments Following the announcement of a new lockdown we have been working with the Department for Education (DfE) to understand what this means for BTEC exams scheduled for January. We want to ensure that all those impacted are supported by us regardless of the choice that is made by a school or college on whether exams take place. Where a college or school decides to offer exams, students will be able to sit external assessments as planned. If a school or college decides not to offer vocational exams, we have agreed the following with Ofqual and the DfE to ensure that no learner is disadvantaged.

- We will award a grade for any learner who is unable to take their exams and has enough evidence to receive a certificate that they need for progression.
- Learners unable to take their assessment this January may be able to take their assessment at a later date. If that is not possible, we will put in place arrangements to ensure you are not disadvantaged.

For more see: [BTEC statement \(5 January\)](#) and [BTEC FAQs](#)

Event We're partnering with FE Week to deliver a webcast looking to the year ahead for the FE sector. Hosted by Steph McGovern, the likes of Gillian Keegan MP, Toby Perkins MP and Cindy Rampersaud will be discussing the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead in a post-pandemic, post-Brexit landscape. Monday 11 January 3.30-4.30pm [Sign up for free here](#)

Blogs This week [Cindy Rampersaud](#) shares the findings of a survey of public attitudes towards succeeding in an ever-changing jobs market. [Blogs home](#)

Pearson tweet of the week



Other news

COVID-19

- [Gavin Williamson statement on school closures and summer exams and debate \(6 January\)](#)
- [Education Secretary outlines plans to support young people](#)
- [Social Mobility Commission: Give schools extra money to let pupils retake school year](#)
- [Children's Commissioner: act now to save children's education and wellbeing](#)

Policy Watch

Week ending Friday 8 January 2021

- Ofqual - Simon Lebus, Chief Regulator, on exams in 2021
- Labour calls on the Government to adopt plan to get every child online
- Petitions Committee to debate petition relating to the rollout of covid-19 vaccinations
- NASUWT: Teachers must be given vaccine priority
- Sutton Trust on Gavin Williamson statement (6 Jan)
- NEU on Gavin Williamson statement (6 Jan)
- NEU on cancellation of SATs
- Voice Union on exams cancellation in England
- 30 December Gavin Williamson statement on education return in January
- 29 December Labour call on Secretary of State to apologise and publish plan for schools

Parliamentary

- House of Lords – debate January and summer exam arrangements. Lord Watson of Invergowrie
- Education Committee evidence session – Left behind white pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds

Regulators & inspectorates

- New interim Chief Regulator of Ofqual announced - Simon Lebus in post until 17 Sept 2021

Schools

- New Institute of Teaching set to be established

Higher Education

- UCAS extends January deadline for all applicants
- New Turing scheme to support student study and work abroad (replacing Erasmus+)
- Kate Green responds to Turing scheme
- Home Office - Relaxation of post-study work visa rules for remote learners

Scotland

- Scotland lockdown - remote learning continues until at least end of January
- Erasmus loss "huge blow" - Universities Minister

Wales

- Welsh schools remain closed until February half term with online learning to continue

Northern Ireland

- CCEA statement on the cancellation of 2021 examinations
- CCEA - Message Regarding Vocational Qualifications Examinations
- Department of Education - Further changes to COVID restrictions in Education settings from January 2021

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Consultation watch

New consultations

- Changes to the publication of statistics on further education and skills inspections and outcomes (Updated) – closes 22 January

Closing consultations

- DfE - Review of Post-16 Qualifications at level 3: Second stage – closes 15 January
- OfS – Consultation on regulating quality and standards in higher education – closes 19 January

What's happening in Parliament next week

House of Commons

- Monday 11 January: Petitions committee - rollout of Covid-19 vaccinations
- Tuesday 12 January: Debate - Effect of the covid-19 outbreak on early years settings - Fleur Anderson MP
- Wednesday 13 January: Education Committee evidence session - The impact of COVID-19 on education and children's services. Gavin Williamson MP & Susan Acland-Hood
- Wednesday 13 January: Debate - Support for pupils' education during school closures - Matt Western MP