



Pearson

Policy Watch

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



The week in a nutshell

The **Secretary of State and Ofqual** announced adaptations to A levels and GCSEs ahead of next summer's exam season, including changes to choice within certain subjects. Contingency arrangements for vocational and technical qualifications have also been published. And results days will be separate once again. Though the detail was welcome, many within education questioned the timing, saying it had come too late in the day.

At the Labour Party Conference, **Keir Starmer** set out plans for an 'Education Excellence Programme', which would include recruiting more teachers and a focus on reforming struggling schools.

In **Scotland** a consultation has been launched on plans to replace **the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)** and reform Education Scotland (ES). This change was one of the recommendations that followed 2020 grading issues.

And **Pearson** has launched a new series of policy papers looking at current issues in education and skills. The first, *Spotlight on Workforce Skills*, covers current reform across the post-16 landscape.

Top stories

Education Secretary announces [plans for 2022 summer exams in England](#)

- Following public consultation, the DfE and Ofqual have confirmed that GCSE, AS and A level exams in England next summer will be adapted to maximise fairness and help students reach their potential.
- These [changes include](#) a choice of topics in some GCSE exams like English literature and history; advance information on the focus of exams to focus students' revision in subjects, where there is not a choice of topics; and support materials like formulae sheets in maths.
- Similarly, they've also set out contingency [arrangements for vocational and technical qualifications \(VTQs\)](#).
- Results for exams next year will return to their normal format, with AS and A levels being released on 18 August, and GCSEs on 25 August. VTQs used to progress in a similar way will be issued on or before the same days, and other VTQs results will continue to be issued throughout the year.

Government [launches consultation on contingency arrangements for 2022 qualifications](#)

- Although the Government are committed to holding exams as normal if possible, they are consulting on contingencies for GCSE, AS, A Levels, Project qualifications and the AEA in mathematics.
- They're seeking views on proposed contingency arrangements for awarding Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs), in the unlikely event that exams are not able to go ahead as planned.

Starmer [sets out some of Labour's plans for education](#)

- Delivering his first in-person speech as leader at Labour Conference this week, Starmer pledged to launch an 'Education Excellence Programme'
- The Programme would include recruiting "thousands of new teachers to address vacancies and skills gaps across the profession".

- It would also involve “reforming Ofsted to focus on supporting struggling schools” and the leader noted that there were 200,000 primary-aged children in England growing up in areas with not a single primary school rated ‘Good’ or ‘Outstanding’.
- His plan would also included providing teachers and headteacher with CPD and leadership skills training.

Pearson **Spotlight policy paper** considers post-16 reform

- Pearson has launched a new *Spotlight* policy series, looking at current policy issues across education and skills. The first paper, *Spotlight on Workforce Skills*, considers ongoing reform across post-16 education, and draws upon desk research, regional policy roundtables (with employers, education establishments, representative bodies, and politicians, and chaired by former skills minister Rt. Hon. Anne Milton), and public polling over the last six months.
- The areas of focus are: 16-19 qualifications; Higher Technical Education; Lifetime Skills Guarantee; and the Lifelong Loan Entitlement
- Key themes include: the inflexibility of funding and regulation; the need for flexibility in courses and provision to support participation; and misalignment of demand and qualification offer (exacerbated by removal of existing high quality programmes as part of the Level 3 review).

Pearson news

New Spotlight Policy Series Our new Pearson “Spotlight” series looks at current policy issues across education and skills. Each report is informed by a range of evidence from policy roundtables, independent polling, interviews, and desk research. The first paper, *Spotlight on Workforce Skills*, covers post-16 education reform. [Click here for more information](#)



Pearson tweets of the week



Other news

Parliamentary

- Department for Education: Awarding qualifications in summer 2022
- Department for Education: Adaptations in 2022 summer exams to ensure fairness for students
- Department for Education: Minister for School Standards responsibilities confirmed
- Department for Education: Minister for Children and Families responsibilities confirmed
- Department for Education: Department for Education non-executive appointments

Regulatory and funding bodies

- Ofqual: Contingency arrangements: GCSE, AS, A level, Project and AEA (Open consultation)
- Ofsted: Ofsted to carry out survey of effectiveness of Skills Bootcamps
- Ofqual: Adaptations in 2022 summer exams to ensure fairness for students
- Ofqual: Proposed changes to the assessment of GCSEs, AS and A levels in 2022 (Consultation concluded)
- Ofqual: Ofqual's approach to grading exams and assessments in summer 2022 and autumn 2021
- Education and Skills Funding Agency: ESFA Update 29 September 2021
- Education and Skills Funding Agency: Support your apprentice through end-point assessment
- Education and Skills Funding Agency: Apprentice guide to assessment
- IfATE: Report into agriculture and animal care training
- IfATE: Apprenticeships and creative industries report

Schools

- Starmer pledges to launch an education "National Excellence Programme"
- Labour Party: CONFERENCE SPEECH: Kate Green MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Education
- Labour Party: CONFERENCE SPEECH: Wes Streeting MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Child Poverty
- NEU: Joint unions submission ahead of Comprehensive Spending Review
- NAHT comments on Keir Starmer's party conference speech
- NEU: Keir Starmer Speech
- NAHT comments on DfE & Ofqual announcements about adaptations in summer 2022 exams
- NEU: Ofqual on 2022 Summer Exams

Further Education & Skills

- Greater London Authority: Mayor encourages workers leaving furlough to retrain for free
- CBI responds to Labour Leader Party Conference speech

Higher Education

- Universities UK: Huge economic contribution of universities must not be forgotten
- MoneySavingExpert: Student loan costs may rise £400/yr

Scotland

- Scottish Government: Education reform consultation

Policy Watch

Week ending Friday 01 October 2021

Wales

- [Welsh Government: Learning of Black, Asian and minority ethnic histories included in new Welsh Curriculum](#)
- [Welsh Government: Minister for Education confirms appointments to the Education Workforce Council](#)
- [Welsh Government: Minister for Education confirms appointments to the Qualifications Wales Board](#)

Northern Ireland

- [Department of Education: Panel to undertake Independent review of education announced](#)

Consultation Watch

New Consultations

- [Contingency arrangements: GCSE, AS, A level, Project and AEA](#) Closes 13 October 2021

Ongoing Consultations

- [Teacher misconduct: the prohibition of teachers advice](#) Closes 19 October 2021
- [Assessment arrangements: Welsh Government](#) Closes: 31 October 2021

Closing Consultations

- [Reforms to Further Education funding and accountability](#) Closes: 7 October 2021
- [Prioritising schools for the School Rebuilding Programme](#) Closes: 8 October 2021

What's happening in Parliament next week

Parliament is now in recess for the party conference season. The House of Lords will return on 11 October, and the House of Commons will return on 18 October.