

**FROM THE OFFICE OF THE MINISTER**



Department of  
**Education**

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**To Parents Guardians and Pupils**

Our Ref: SUB 0127-2021

3 February 2021

Dear Parents, Guardians and Students

## **AWARDING ARRANGEMENTS FOR CCEA QUALIFICATIONS IN 2021**

Further to the cancellation of CCEA GCSE, AS and A Level examinations on 6 January, I am writing to provide further details in regard to the alternative awarding arrangements for qualifications in 2021.

These measures aim to take account of the unprecedented level of disruption to learning that our young people have faced and continue to face. They also ensure that young people who are taking qualifications in 2021 will be able to receive fair and objective grades to enable them to continue to the next stage of their education or training, or into employment.

I would like to particularly thank the schools and colleges, parents and young people who have worked with us in getting to this point; their input has been a tremendous help in informing this work.

### **CCEA GCSE, AS and A Level Qualifications**

In place of CCEA examinations in summer 2021, a student's grade in a subject will be based on the professional assessment by their school of the evidenced standard at which they are performing. These will be known as **Centre Determined Grades**. A broadly similar approach is being adopted right across the United Kingdom.

Schools and colleges can use evidence of students' performance from any point in the course to inform the Centre Determined Grade. It is, therefore, important that all students continue to engage with their learning as much as possible, as teachers will

be gathering evidence of the standard of each pupil's work during both the current period of remote learning and when students return to school.

## **CCEA Occupational Studies, Entry Level and Vocationally Related Qualifications**

Alongside GCSEs, AS and A Levels, CCEA offers a range of entry level qualifications, vocationally related qualifications and Occupational Studies Levels 1 and 2.

These qualifications have no examinations and are not affected by the cancellation of the GCSE, AS and A Level examinations. However, the award is normally based on internal written assessments and practical assessments. With the ongoing disruption, I recognise that completing the full quota of practical components and other formal internal assessments for these qualifications will be challenging.

Therefore, for CCEA's Occupational Studies, Entry Level and Vocationally Related qualifications, I can confirm that there will be no formal assessment in 2021. Instead, teachers will be asked to use their professional judgement and the evidence available in order to reach a Centre Determined Grade.

## **Vocational Qualifications**

Some learners may be working towards other Entry Level or Vocational qualifications provided by an Awarding Organisation other than CCEA. These qualifications fall under the remit of the Department for the Economy.

The Minister for the Economy recently announced the cancellation of all external vocational exams for the remainder of this year, including Essential Skills. I understand that Minister Dodds has instructed CCEA Regulation to ensure that awarding organisations put in place suitable alternative awarding arrangements that are reflective of this year's particular circumstances and which will ensure that learners receive fair and timely results.

I understand that the Minister expects clarity on the alternative arrangements for the majority of vocational qualifications to be provided by awarding organisations operating from elsewhere in the UK, as early as possible in March 2021. In relation to Essential Skills and other Northern Ireland only qualifications, the Minister expects clarity on the alternative arrangements to be available by the end of February 2021.

## **Further Information and Guidance**

CCEA will provide more detailed information to schools in the next few weeks. I have enclosed a number of factsheets and a short leaflet providing more information for parents and students on the awarding of CCEA qualifications in 2021. More detailed

guidance is also provided, which includes Frequently Asked Questions. These documents and further information can also be accessed on the Department of Education's website at [Alternative awarding arrangements 2021 | Department of Education \(education-ni.gov.uk\)](https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/alternative-awarding-arrangements-2021)

You will wish to have more information on the arrangements for qualifications in 2022. I have asked CCEA to examine how best to adapt qualifications for 2022 to ease burden and reflect the ongoing disruption to teaching and learning. I will aim to make a further announcement on arrangements for 2022 by the end of March 2021 or as soon as possible thereafter.

I am very aware that many of our young people have been anxious about their future. I hope these arrangements will ease some of those concerns and provide the clarity needed so that students can move forward with confidence. I commend our young people for their resilience and efforts in these difficult times, and I thank you for all you are doing in their best interests.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter Weir". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'P'.

**Peter Weir MLA**  
**Minister of Education**