

Dear families:

Re: Ofqual’s announced changes to GCSE assessments for 2020/21

As you will be aware, the exams regulator Ofqual has confirmed the changes that will be made to GCSE assessments next year. The decisions were [published in the outcome](#) to a consultation on the proposals for exams in 2021, which was drawn up in response to concerns about the continuing impact of coronavirus. The changes proposed are supposed to address concerns that pupils may have missed out on learning, and to enable certain assessments to go ahead in a way that allows for maximum social distancing, for example by reducing the need for group performances.

For a number of the subjects below, it is now up to the exam boards to clarify their individual requirements for the schools that use them. Subject leads are in regular contact with the exam boards to identify these specific requirements and ensure that these are factored into our planning.

We will publish regular updates to the families of Year 11 students when these exam board specific requirements have been resolved – we have been told to expect to receive this information in full by the end of September.

Below is a list of the changes by each GCSE subject. There will be no changes to Business, maths, psychology, religious studies or statistics. Please note that the changes for V-CERTs (Engineering and Health & Fitness) are yet to be finalised by Ofqual.

Subject	Subject leader	Subject changes for 2020/21
Art & Design (includes Art, Graphics & Photography)	Mr Hudson rhudson@st-birinus.oxon.sch.uk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment will be based on portfolio only.
Computer Science	Mr Rousch arousch@st-birinus.oxon.sch.uk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pupils will be allowed to undertake their programming project in unsupervised time (i.e. as homework).
Dance	Mrs Hook shook@didcotgirls.oxon.sch.uk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For the performance assessment, pupils won’t be required to perform as part of a group, and will be assessed via a complete “unedited audio-visual recording of the performed dances from the perspective of the audience”. For the choreography assessment, exam boards will be able to accept “alternative evidence to illustrate the intended final piece, the choreographic intent and how that was developed”. The boards will “provide clarification” about their requirements.
Drama	Mrs Tottman mtottman@st-birinus.oxon.sch.uk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Live performance statement will be satisfied through “streamed or recorded performances”, and exam boards will be able to accept “alternative evidence” to illustrate pupils’ intended devised performance. For text-based performances, exam boards will be allowed to accept either a complete and unedited audio-visual recording or a “presentation of each discrete aspect/each student’s individual contribution”.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For both NEA elements, participation in a monologue will be permitted. Exam boards will “provide clarification” about their requirements.
English Language	Miss Rabey hrabey@st-birinus.oxon.sch.uk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There will be no requirement for recordings of spoken language assessment for exam board monitoring. Instead, the assessment will be allowed to take place before a single teacher representing an “audience”. Spoken assessments can also be taken at any time during the course and “by virtual means”.
English Literature	Miss Rabey hrabey@st-birinus.oxon.sch.uk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools will be given a choice of topics on which students have to answer questions in exams. A Shakespeare play will make up a “minimum common core”, which all pupils will be assessed on, and schools will be able to choose two more options from poetry, 19th century novel and fiction/drama from the British Isles from 1914. However, the document states that exam boards can add to the core “if they wish”. We are confirming with our exam board (AQA) if this will be the case for our students.
Film Studies	Ms Edmond ledmond@st-birinus.oxon.sch.uk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exam boards will be able to accept a prototype or mock-up, with supporting evidence, of an extract from a genre-based film or a genre-based screenplay with shooting script, as long as they are in response to an exam board set brief and include evaluative analysis of the pupil’s own work. Exam boards will “provide clarification” about their requirements.
Food preparation and nutrition	Ms Kumagai skumagai@st-birinus.oxon.sch.uk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NEA1 will be removed, and earlier release of NEA2 will be permitted. Requirements for NEA2 will be reduced to two dishes to be completed within three hours (not two as originally proposed), to allow for students to use “complex processes such as baking, lamination, making ice-cream and to accommodate public health restrictions”.
Geography	Ms Loosley aloosley@st-birinus.oxon.sch.uk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools will no longer have to make a written statement declaring that pupils have been given the opportunity to undertake two days of fieldwork. Pupils will also not have to answer questions in the exam relating to their own fieldwork experience.
History	Mr Gregory Bgregory@st-birinus.oxon.sch.uk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools will be given a choice of topics on which students have to answer questions in exams. There will be a core topic identified for each specification, but schools will have choices beyond that.

Modern Foreign Languages (French & Spanish)	Ms Ghani sghani@st-birinus.oxon.sch.uk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The spoken-language assessment will be an endorsement reported on a three-point scale (pass, merit, distinction) and will be assessed by teachers during the course of study. Exam boards will also be allowed to include an additional optional question in the writing assessment “which would enable students to focus on fewer themes in their writing”.
Music	Mr Dingley sdingley@didcotgirls.oxon.sch.uk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For the performance assessment, there will be no requirement for pupils to perform as part of an ensemble. Pupils will need to submit a complete and unedited recording of their live performances, and the score or lead sheet for that performance “where available”. For the composition assessment, the composition may be in response to an exam board brief or freely-composed, and pupils will have to submit a “complete recording” of each composition with a score, lead sheet or written account of the composition produced by the pupil. However, the pupil does not have to perform their own compositions, and recordings may be computer-generated. Exam boards will “provide clarification” about their requirements.
Physical Education	Mr Tamblin stamblin@st-birinus.oxon.sch.uk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce the practical requirements to two activities, and allow both to be individual. Remote moderation of video evidence will be permitted for all activities.
Science – including Biology, chemistry, physics and Combined Science	Miss Thom sthom@st-birinus.oxon.sch.uk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pupils will be able to cover ‘required practicals’ through observations of demonstrations or simulations.
21st Century Design	Miss Cottrell rcottrell@st-birinus.oxon.sch.uk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exam boards will be able to accept mock-ups and/or “clear and detailed intentions of prototypes”. The boards will “provide clarification” about their requirements. Demonstration of using machinery, tools and processes will be permitted.

If you have any specific questions about the nature of the assessment framework for subjects that your son is studying, please to direct these initially to the lead teacher of that subject.

Yours faithfully;

Mr Irwin, Deputy Headteacher

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