GOV•UK

ofqual

Guidance

What you should know during your exams and assessments

Published 15 January 2026

Applies to England

Contents

How should I prepare for my exams and assessments?

What if I am ill or something else affects my exams or assessments?

What happens if you cheat?

OGL

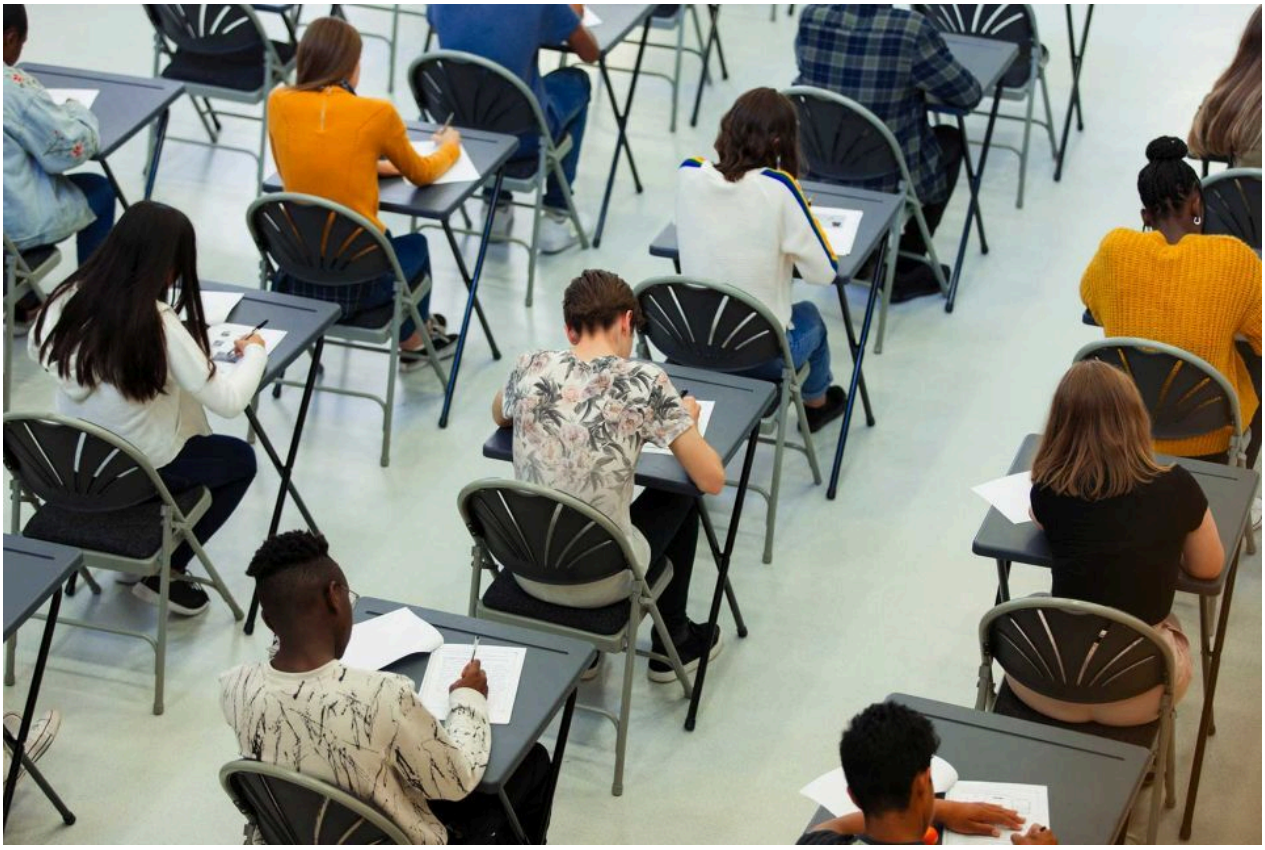
© Crown copyright 2026

This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated. To view this licence, visit nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3 or write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gov.uk.

Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

This publication is available at https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofqual-student-guide-to-exams-and-assessments-in-2026/what-you-should-know-during-your-exams-and-assessments

How should I prepare for my exams and assessments?



Speak to your teachers or exams officer before your exams and assessments to make sure you know what will happen and what you need to do. For example:

- make sure you have your own timetable and know where and when your exams or assessments will be, including when you need to arrive
- know what equipment you're allowed to take in for each exam or assessment – this includes approved calculators that are only allowed in some exams and assessments
- use a clear pencil case and, if you need a water bottle, remove the label
- don't take a mobile phone, watch or any other electronic device into an exam, even if it is switched off, as you could lose marks or be disqualified
- when you receive your exam paper, check it has the correct information on it, for example, date, name and tier of exam
- if you are not sure about anything, raise this immediately with the exam invigilator
- listen carefully and follow all instructions given by the exam invigilator

What if I am ill or something else affects my exams or assessments?



Special Consideration is any adjustment given to a student who has experienced a temporary illness, injury or event outside of their control at the time of the exam or assessment, which significantly affects their ability to take an exam or assessment.

Special Consideration is only for things that happen immediately before or during an exam or assessment that have a significant effect on a student's ability to take that exam or assessment, or on how they perform. It is important that qualification results reflect what students know, understand and can do at that time.

To be eligible for Special Consideration you must have been fully prepared for the assessment and have covered the whole course. You will not be eligible for Special Consideration because you did not cover the course due to joining the class part way through, or if your education was disrupted due to staff shortages, planned building work or a lack of facilities.

The 3 types of Special Consideration are:

- changes to the way assessments are taken if a student has temporarily experienced an illness or injury, referred to as 'access arrangements' - for

example, a student with a broken arm may have someone write their dictated answers

- a small number of extra marks may be awarded if your exam performance is affected by temporary illness, injury, or other unforeseen circumstance
- awarding a grade if you unavoidably missed an exam or assessment, as long as you have completed at least one other exam or assessment for that qualification

If you think you might be eligible for Special Consideration, you should talk to your school or college as soon as possible.

There is further information available for GCSE, AS, A level and some VTQs in the JCQ publication: A guide to the special consideration process (https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/JCQ-A-guide-to-the-special-consideration-process-FINAL_2025_26.pdf).

What happens if you cheat?



Malpractice involves cheating or some form of wrongdoing. Examples include:

- sharing answers

- impersonation
- leaking exam papers or other assessment materials or using leaked materials
- swapping scripts
- inappropriate use of artificial intelligence (AI)
- smuggling information to help you in your exam into exam halls
- taking mobile phones and communication devices into exam halls

You must not wear a watch in the exam or take a mobile phone into the exam hall with you, as doing so will also be treated as malpractice.

All work submitted as part of exams and assessments must be in your own words, you must reference any sources you use, including any AI tools. Check with your teacher before using AI tools as rules vary by qualification. If AI use is allowed it must be referenced correctly. Incorrect use of AI tools or failing to reference its use is malpractice.

You may see websites or individuals offering leaked exam papers or other assessment materials before your exams or assessments. Do not look at any papers or materials offered in this way. They are probably fake. Attempting to look at exam papers before the exam, even if they are fake, can be considered malpractice.

If you cheat or commit malpractice you could face serious consequences, including being disqualified from your qualifications.

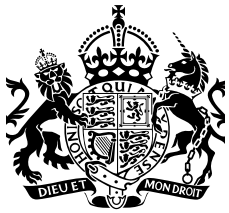
How to report suspected malpractice

If you see or suspect malpractice in exams and assessments, you should report it to a teacher or exams officer. Your school or college must report any potential malpractice to the awarding organisation.

All allegations of malpractice are taken extremely seriously and will be investigated.

If you would rather not talk to your school or college, you can contact the relevant awarding organisation or Ofqual (https://complaints.ofqual.gov.uk/).





OGL

All content is available under the Open Government Licence v3.0, except where otherwise stated

© Crown copyright