



6 January 2021

Dear Parent / Carer

I am writing to convey my utter dismay with the way that the DfE have communicated and handled their plans around the running of BTEC, Cambridge Nationals and Vocational exams taking place today and later this week. I have tried to summarise the timeline of events leading up to today, so you have a very clear picture of what has been happening. I hope this allows you to see why there has not been the clarity and efficiency you would expect from us at this time.

I have met with the Exams Manager, Outcomes Lead and BTEC subject leads this morning and at this point in time we **will run the exams as planned**. Clearly you may have many questions but as you will have seen I simply can't provide details around the process moving forwards at this stage. We know some students may be isolating themselves, shielding or have other reasons why they feel that they can't sit this exam.

Please could you complete the form below so we have a clear view of your intention with regards to sitting these exams. This should be completed 24 hrs before your exam date just in case your situation changes:

[Intent Form](#)

Timeline

4th January - PM Statement to the Nation at 8pm

“We recognise that this will mean it is not possible or fair for all exams to go ahead this summer as normal. The Education Secretary will work with Ofqual to put in place alternative arrangements.”

We shared our communication to all parents and stated that exams would not go ahead on the premise of this statement. Later that evening the DfE released the statement below and this led to further confusion around how BTECs would run with exams now but none in the summer, there had been no further detail from boards or the DfE to clarify the position.

4th January - 9.49pm



Department for Education 
@educationgovuk

...

Vocational exams in England will continue as planned in January.

Students taking exams should attend as scheduled.

9:49 PM · Jan 4, 2021 · Twitter Web App

This was then clarified in an email sent to schools below.

8.45am - 5th January

"DfE has now confirmed that vocational exams, including BTECs, will go ahead as planned. We are working with the DfE urgently to understand the implications of this and will share any updates as soon as we have them."

There were no update given all day, but just after 6pm last night the DfE released the image below from their twitter feed

6pm - 5th January

EXAMS

- Schools and colleges can continue with the vocational and technical exams that are due to take place in January, where they judge it right to do so
- We understand this is a difficult time, but we want to support schools and colleges whose students have worked hard to prepare for assessments and exams

Find the latest guidance at gov.uk/coronavirus

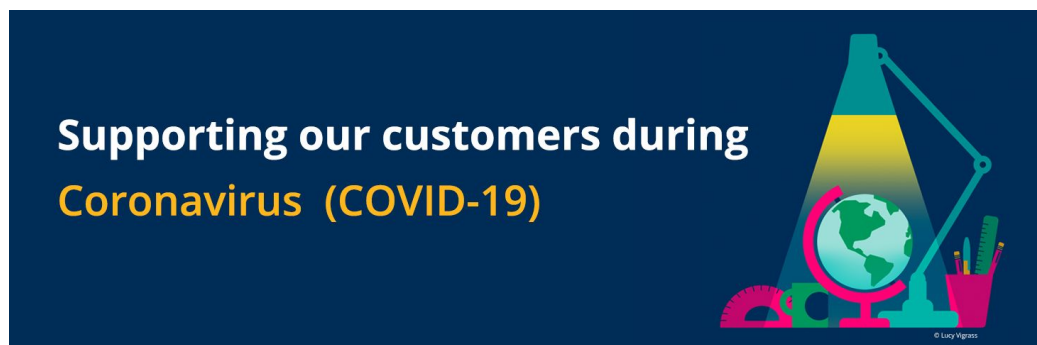
STAY HOME ► PROTECT THE NHS ► SAVE LIVES

As a Headteacher with over 20 years of experience I have no idea how as a school we decide (judge) if it is right for an exam to go ahead with no additional detail. There was no explanation of what would happen if we were not to run the exam, no explanation as to how students would be accredited and also no indication of how they would ensure fairness across the board. Given BTEC exams are due to commence this morning this has left schools in the impossible situation of not knowing how to act in the best interests of their students and to ensure no one is disadvantaged by any decision made.

It would also seem very apparent that the exam boards were also not aware of any of these changes and have been working hard to clarify the position. The guidance sent below from Pearson arrived at 10.20pm last night, with exams due to start at 9am in the morning.

As a school had we not been following these developments closely and checking emails late into the night these developments would have been missed. The confusion caused shows a complete disregard for our students sitting these exams and has added undue stress at an incredibly difficult time. It also shows a complete lack of planning on the part of the DfE.

9pm - 5th January



5 January 2021

Dear Colleague,

Following the Prime Minister's 4 January announcement of a new lockdown and the news that schools, colleges and training providers will close to the majority of learners, we have been working with the Department of Education (DfE) to understand what this means for BTEC exams scheduled for January. Our aim has been to bring you the clarity we know you need and deserve, as soon as possible.

The DfE confirmed on January 4 that they expected scheduled vocational exams to go ahead and it has updated that guidance today (5 January) to give schools, colleges and training providers the choice to offer students vocational exams, should schools and colleges judge it right to do so.

We want to ensure that you are supported by us regardless of the choice that is made by your school or college on whether exams take place. If your college or school decides to offer exams, you will be able to run your external assessments as planned and if your 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 certificate 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 no learner is disadvantaged.

If you choose to continue with vocational exams this January, please find our existing guidance on the BTEC approach to adaptation to delivery and assessment in 2020/2021 on our dedicated webpage. BTEC exams commence on the 6 January with some tasks already in progress.

Here are some useful links:

You can find information on managing absences

Guidance on existing adaptations for BTECs

We recognise the huge amount of work you have already undertaken in line with government announcements regarding lateral testing and the staggered return, to enable the safe return of learners, I want to pass on my thanks to you, for your enduring commitment and support.

If you have any questions or need support, please contact us.

We will update you with further information soon. Thank you for your continued patience during these unprecedented times.

Best wishes,

Cindy Rampersaud
Senior Vice President
BTEC & Apprenticeships

At the same time this was released this document was also circulating:

BTEC Exams in January 2021 Have Been Cancelled

Updated: 5 January 2021 at 20:00

The Department for Education (DfE) and Pearson have tonight published an update on VTQs. Scheduled BTEC exams were due to begin tomorrow 6 January.

We have tonight (5 January 2021) decided to:

- 1. Cancel ALL January BTEC exams.**
- 2. Move all BTEC classes to fully remote delivery.**

We have NOT yet cancelled ESOL, Functional Skills and wider VTQs eg. City & Guilds exams. However, we are waiting for further updates on wider exams planned for later this month and will update as soon as these are available.

Please contact your School Administrator or Teacher if you need any further information.

As a school we have literally had no time to plan, to communicate, to discuss what our approach should be. I feel we have failed our students and let them down at this time, through no fault of our own and that is a bitter pill to swallow. Our greatest aim throughout all of this is to ensure that students are not disadvantaged in any way but the current approach of the DfE is making this an extremely difficult goal to achieve.

I apologise for the lengthy letter but felt it was important that you understood what we have been faced with and why you haven't had the clarity that you and your child need and deserve.

Yours sincerely



W Teece
Headteacher