

# New UK Government Covid testing site opens in Paisley

The UK Government has today [Tuesday 19 January] opened a new walk-through coronavirus testing centre at Bridge Street Car Park in Paisley (PA1 1XN). The centre is easily accessible for people without a car.

The test centre is part of the largest network of diagnostic testing facilities created in British history. In Scotland, this comprises of six drive through sites, 26 walk-through sites, 21 mobile units, plus the Glasgow Lighthouse Lab which is working round the clock to process samples.

In Scotland, the UK Government is providing all Covid testing and test processing outside of the NHS. Around two thirds of all daily tests are provided by the UK Government, in support of Scotland's health services.

Tests must be booked in advance at [NHS Inform](#) or by calling 0800 028 2816. People should only book a test if they have coronavirus symptoms (a high temperature, a new and continuous cough, or a loss or change to their sense of smell or taste).

Health Minister Lord Bethell said:

To respond to the coronavirus, we have built a major testing and tracing system from scratch. We are constantly working to expand and improve it with new technologies and innovations so everyone with symptoms can get a test.

New walk-in sites like this one makes it even easier to get a test no matter where you live. If you have symptoms of coronavirus, I urge you to book a test today and follow the advice of NHS Test and Protect if you are contacted to protect others and stop the spread of the virus.

Baroness Dido Harding, Interim Executive Chair of the National Institute for Health Protection, said:

Walk-through sites offer communities better access to coronavirus testing, so everyone with symptoms can get a test. This new site is part of our ongoing work to expand our testing network across the UK which now has the capacity to process more than 700,000 tests a day. We will continue to expand capacity to improve test turnaround times and push forward testing innovations to make sure anyone who needs a test can get one.

Please book a test if you have coronavirus symptoms: a new continuous cough, a high temperature and a loss or change in sense

of smell or taste, and follow the advice of NHS Test and Protect if you are contacted.

UK Government Minister for Scotland, Iain Stewart said:

The UK Government is doing everything it can to support people in all parts of the UK through the pandemic.

Testing continues to play an important role how we manage the virus alongside the roll out of vaccines, helping to identify local outbreaks, slow down the rate of transmission and protect communities. I would like to thank the public for continuing to do the right thing and come forward to be tested when they display symptoms.

The UK Government continues to provide the bulk of testing in Scotland, with this new walk-through centre in Paisley just the latest in our extensive network. We have also secured and paid for millions of doses of the Pfizer and Oxford vaccines for all parts of the UK.

Hope is on the horizon, but we can't let up on our efforts to contain the virus.

Dr Linda De Caestecker, Director for Public Health at NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, said:

We welcome the additional testing facility in Paisley which will make it easier for more people to access testing during this crucial period.

Testing and working alongside other control measures will be key to helping control and minimise the spread of the virus in our communities.

Simon Venn, Mitie Chief Government & Strategy Officer, said:

Our priority during the pandemic is to support the nation's efforts to fight COVID-19 and help keep the country running. Testing is a critical part of the UK's strategy to combat coronavirus and we're proud to support the UK Government with this vital task. A big thank you to all the NHS staff, Mitie employees and other frontline heroes in Paisley, who are working tirelessly to keep us all safe.

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# 2021 grade plans – a bigger disaster than last year?

**By Sammy Wright, Social Mobility Commissioner for Schools and Higher Education**

The government has published a broadly sensible proposal for exams in 2021, with one glaring error.

To look at how we calculate grades without looking at learning loss and catch up at the same time leaves young people at risk of catastrophic unfairness.

The cancellation of examinations this summer is not because the pandemic makes them impossible to sit – the BTECs that went ahead last week are proof of this – but rather because the unequal impact of the pandemic makes it impossible for them to be fair.

## **Not on a level playing field**

This is for the simple fact that disadvantaged students have had less digital access and schooling, resulting in higher learning loss than their more advantaged peers. They will not be on a level playing field.

As such, qualifications for 2021 can never be an objective measure of performance in the way we are used to, no matter how much we might wish it.

And if, as the proposal suggests, we ask teachers to ignore lost learning and attempt ‘objectivity’ while simultaneously suggesting that the grades they award should match the inflated profile of 2020 results, we are heading for a worse disaster than last year.

The destinations gap between the disadvantaged students most impacted by COVID-19 and their peers will yawn wider than ever.

## **Correct bias and ensure parity**

Once we accept that these judgements must inevitably include some measure of a student’s potential, the government is right in saying we need to use assessment evidence – probably based on the cancelled exams – to inform teacher judgement, help correct bias and ensure parity.

But this evidence must only be a guide and a check. We also need to give teachers the opportunity to show how far a student currently is from their true potential.

For students who might have the ability to progress on to the next stage, but

have high levels of lost learning, we must ensure that they are offered proper support and catch up at the start of the next phase of their education.

One solution is a fully funded extra year of education, for example expanding and covering tuition fees for the Foundation year that many universities already offer and adding a year of free post-16 provision.

Alternatively, we could provide an extra term on all post-16 and higher education (HE) courses. This could be made possible by increasing the funding of post-16 providers to enable them to provide more hours of teaching per week, and by adjusting course completion dates for HE.

The government's proposals make several important and useful suggestions:

- Grades and assessments – The consultation is absolutely right to say that we must ensure that learning continues right to the end of the academic year. Grades are only an indicator. To progress, students must have, as far as possible, the education the grades represent. As such, we whole-heartedly welcome the proposal that grades should be linked to school-based assessments in the summer – without which many young people would disengage. But we caution that to simply make this a direct link, with students effectively given mock exam grades, would be the worst of both worlds and would open the door to systemic inequality.
- Ensuring clearing happens after appeals: It is also right to propose that we must have a robust system of appeals, designed in such a way that schools can submit their own evidence in good time to ensure everyone has a verified grade before the traditional results day. At all costs we must avoid the chaos of clearing in 2020 – and as such, we again call on UCAS and universities to ensure that clearing does not happen until all appeals have been responded to.
- Vocational education is important: The proposals for vocational and other qualifications are sensible in outline and rightly reflect the huge variety in these courses and the uses to which they are put, as well as the range of evidence already gathered and the skills of centres in assessing this. Getting the detail right will be essential, as will ensuring that students who elected not to sit BTECs in the confusion of the lockdown announcement are not penalised for this decision.
- Opportunity to sit exams: The consultation is right to make special provision for private entrants. Exam boards have already been planning an extra, one-off alternative exam in July for students who miss the main series. Given the proposed early release of grades to students, there seems little justification for not allowing any other student the option to sit this exam if they are not happy with the grade awarded by their institution and feel they have no grounds for appeal.

We cannot lose sight of the most important fact that lies at the heart of this. Ofqual must work closely with DfE to address policy, concurrently dealing with qualifications and learning loss.

No matter how grades are awarded, many students will be embarking on courses in September 2021 at a lower level than they may have done in a normal year. We must have a bold and comprehensive plan to enable the most disadvantaged groups to catch up with their more advantaged peers. It needs to be part of a long-term strategy, fully funded, planned by educationalists with cross party consensus, that looks forward for the next five years to support those most impacted by COVID-19 over their educational lifetime.

Many of us have been calling for this since the start of the pandemic. Now it is time for action.

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## **Appointment of Chancellor of the High Court**

Press release

Her Majesty The Queen has been pleased to approve the appointment of The Rt Hon Sir Julian Flaux as the Chancellor of the High Court with effect from 3 February 2021.



Her Majesty The Queen has been pleased to approve the appointment of The Rt Hon Sir Julian Flaux as the Chancellor of the High Court with effect from 3 February 2021. This appointment follows the elevation of Sir Geoffrey Vos as Master of the Rolls.

### **Biography of candidate**

The Rt Hon Sir Julian Flaux was called to the Bar in 1978 and took Silk in 1994. He started his judicial career as a Recorder in 2000. He was appointed a Deputy High Court Judge in 2002 and a High Court Judge (Queen's Bench Division) in 2007. He was the Judge in Charge of the Commercial Court between 2014 and 2015 and a Presiding Judge on the Midland Circuit between 2010 and 2013. In 2016, he was appointed President of the Special Immigration Appeals Commission. He was elevated to the Court of Appeal in 2016. He has been

Supervising Judge of the Commercial Court since 2020.

## **The Appointment**

The appointment of the Chancellor of the High Court is made by Her Majesty The Queen on the advice of the Prime Minister and the Lord Chancellor following the recommendation of an independent selection panel chaired by Lord Burnett of Maldon, the Lord Chief Justice. The other panel members were: Lady Black (Justice of the Supreme Court), Professor Lord Kakkar (Chairman of the Judicial Appointments Commission [JAC]), Ms Sue Hoyle OBE (Lay JAC Commissioner) and Ms Jane Furniss CBE (JAC Commissioner). The Chancellor of the High Court (CHC) is one of the most senior judges in England and Wales and holds day-to-day responsibility for the operation of the Business & Property Courts (B&PCs) in London and its seven city centres across the country, in consultation with the President of the Queen's Bench Division. The B&PCs are a global centre of excellence for the resolution of business disputes and hear some of the most complex and high-profile domestic and international specialist civil claims in the world.

The CHC has full responsibility for the Chancery lists of the B&PCs, which includes the Business List, the Insolvency and Companies List, the Intellectual Property List (including IPEC), the Property Trusts and Probate List, the Competition List, the Financial List (jointly with the Commercial Court) and the Revenue List. Those responsibilities include the deployment of the specialist judges who conduct the hearings and the allocation of cases.

Originally created as the office of Vice-Chancellor in 1813 and having undergone a number of changes in role since then, the CHC also presides in the Court of Appeal (Civil Division) and sits at first instance in the B&PCs.

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## **Change of Her Majesty's Ambassador to Mexico: Jon Benjamin**

Press release

Mr Jon Benjamin has been appointed Her Majesty's Ambassador to Mexico in succession to Ms Corin Robertson who will be transferring to another Diplomatic Service appointment. Mr Benjamin will take up his appointment during August 2021.



Full name: Jonathan Benjamin

Married to: Carolina Vasquez

Children: One son

#### Dates

#### Role

FCDO, Director of Learning, Principal of the Diplomatic Academy; also FCO, Alternate Director, Operations, COVID-19 Taskforce (March – June 2020)

2014 to 2017 Accra, High Commissioner and Her Majesty's Non-Resident Ambassador to Togo, Benin and Burkina Faso

2009 to 2014 Santiago, Her Majesty's Ambassador

2009 Full-time Language Training (Spanish)

2008 to 2009 Secondments as adviser to the Boards of AIG (New York) and Eurasia Group (New York)

2005 to 2008 New York, Deputy, later Acting, Consul-General

2002 to 2005 FCO, Head, Human Rights Policy Department

2000 to 2001 FCO, Deputy Head, Drugs and International Crime Department

2000 FCO, Head, Zimbabwe Emergency Unit

1996 to 1999 Ankara, First Secretary (Head of Political Section)

1995 to 1996 Full-time Language Training (Turkish)

1993 to 1995 FCO, Private Secretary to Minister for Europe and Latin America

1992 to 1993 FCO, Head of Section (Central Asia/Caucasus), Eastern Department

1988 to 1991 Jakarta, Third, later Second Secretary (Political)

1987 to 1988 Full-time Language Training (Indonesian)

1986 to 1987 FCO, Desk Officer for Burma and Laos

1986 DFID (then ODA), Desk Officer for Pakistan

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# New national construction products regulator announced

## News story

A national construction product regulator will operate within the Office for Product Safety and Standards which will be expanded with £10m in funding.



The Government has committed to establish a national regulator for construction products as part of wider reforms to address systemic failings identified by the Hackitt Review.

It will operate within the Office for Product Safety and Standards which will be expanded and given £10m in funding to establish the new function.

The move is part of the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government's work to address the culture within the construction industry.

There's more information on the [Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government webpages](#)

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