

# Crucial support for the Sellafield mission

News story

We're sharing stories of people working on the Sellafield site during the coronavirus pandemic. Today we feature Mitie OneFM Operations Manager Sara Hammel.



"Its been a team effort" said Operations Manager Sara Hammel.

Keeping Sellafield running, even with a reduced workforce, requires a range of support services.

Throughout the lockdown operations like laundry, cleaning, and postal services have continued.

Sara Hammel is part of the team who make sure these vital tasks are done safely.

She said:

Considering no-one has experienced anything like this before, I think we've managed it pretty well.

It was difficult at first. People were struggling with social distancing and needed to be reminded a lot. Like the rest of the country, we had issues obtaining certain materials like hand sanitisers.

We had some difficult conversations to begin with. People were naturally very concerned and wanting to stock up.

Our role was to educate people and inform them of the increased demands over the whole site. We worked to prioritise and manage the distribution to ensure each area had sufficient. Thankfully we were

always able to ensure that everyone had the materials, including hand sanitiser, that they needed.

We very quickly got past those early issues. We've all been learning together. It's been a real team effort. My employer Mitie have been very supportive and Sellafield Ltd as a client have been great. We've had regular briefings with all of the information we need to keep our teams safe.

Of course, people will be apprehensive about returning to work, but they shouldn't fear coming back onto site. It's a different way of doing things but measures have been put in place to ensure you can carry out your job safely. And, despite the media headlines, we've had sufficient PPE throughout.

Sara's responsibilities include looking after buildings and managing laundry and changeroom operatives.

She added:

We've put our staff on a rota to reduce our footprint on the site at any one time and to allow social distancing.

Laundry and changeroom workers are working on a four-on, four-off shift pattern so they can work safely and still carry out business as usual.

We've focused on potential touch points and hard surfaces, making sure these are managed safely, and our operatives have been offered additional PPE.

The management team is also working split shifts – one week on-site, one week off – so we can maintain social distancing also.

Sara has spent more than three decades working at Sellafield but admits she's never seen anything like the current situation.

This is by far the weirdest time I've known in 30 years on site.

Seeing the site virtually empty every day has been bizarre.

I've personally never felt worried about coming to work. I genuinely haven't given it a second thought.

My wife's a police officer so we're used to accepting risk as part of everyday life. It's one of those situations where you just get on with it and get the job done.

## UK calls for global action to protect vital money transfers

- UK and Switzerland call for countries to work together to make sure people can continue sending money to relatives in other countries during coronavirus outbreak
- Such remittances account for more than 5% of GDP in at least 60 developing countries
- World Bank predicts remittances to low and middle income countries will fall by 20% or \$110 billion in 2020

The UK and Switzerland today called for greater global collaboration to make sure diaspora communities around the world can continue to send financial support to their families in developing countries.

The joint call highlighted the urgent need for people to be able to continue accessing money transfer services, and for governments to make sure those funds reach those reliant on this support.

Both the UK and Switzerland are also urging countries to support greater access to digital remittance services and to declare remittances an essential financial service. They are also encouraging remittance service providers to reduce costs and fees for people making payments.

Money sent by individuals to family and friends living in low and middle income countries totalled \$554bn in 2019 and is a vital lifeline in many developing countries, boosting economic development and lifting people out of poverty.

But coronavirus is already having a big impact, with a drop in the wages of migrant workers and coronavirus restrictions making it more difficult for people to access money transfer services.

The World Bank predicts that remittances to low and middle income countries will fall by 20% in 2020, totalling \$110 billion.

A drop of this size would have a severe impact on countries where many people are already facing destitution and even starvation as a result of the huge economic impact of the pandemic. Remittances account for more than 5% of GDP for at least 60 developing countries. Life in lockdown is making it harder to send and receive funds.

International Development Secretary Anne-Marie Trevelyan said:

“The coronavirus pandemic means we are all concerned about how our family and

friends here and overseas are coping. That's why we're making it easier for diaspora communities in the UK and other countries to continue to transfer money to their relatives.

"This will be lifesaving for some families in developing countries where coronavirus is making a lack of food and healthcare, and extreme poverty, even worse. We are helping to prevent fragile economies from facing potential collapse during the pandemic."

Federal Councillor Ignazio Cassis, head of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs added:

"Remittances are important, but difficult because of COVID-19. So let's make sure those barriers are removed worldwide! New technologies can help us here."

Previous UK aid support is already helping to make money transfers easier, by helping 65 million people in the poorest countries access digital financial services so they can receive funds via their mobile phones or online.

UK aid support has also helped to give two million more people access to digital remittance services so they can send and receive money from home.

Today's call by the UK and Switzerland was backed by partners, including the World Bank, the UN Capital Development Fund, UN Development Programme and the International Organisation for Migration. A number of countries have already joined, including Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Jamaica, Mexico, Nigeria and Pakistan.

The UK Government has made it clear that in the UK people can continue to visit remittance centres should they need to, while observing social distancing and staying safe. Digital money transfer services are also available.

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## **[Ofqual GCSE and A level consultation outcomes and autumn exam series proposals](#)**

Students will be awarded calculated grades in GCSEs, AS and A levels, the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) and Advanced Extension Award in maths (AEA) this summer, after exams were cancelled in England this summer to help fight the spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19). Eighty two percent of the 12,623 respondents to our consultation on this summer's exceptional arrangements agreed with our proposal to adopt the grading process into our regulatory framework this year. We have today, Friday 22 May, published [our analysis and](#)

[key decisions](#), and updated our [information for Heads of Centres](#).

An important feature of the overall arrangements this summer is the planned additional exam series in the autumn, which will provide an opportunity for students unable to receive a calculated grade, and others who would like the opportunity to improve their grade, to take an exam. Having worked closely with the Department for Education and exam boards, and listened to the views of groups representing students, school and college leaders, we are also setting out for consultation today [our proposals on the arrangements for this additional exam series](#).

Our consultation includes proposals to require exam boards to offer exams in all subjects, and to offer the full suite of papers as are normally offered in other summer exam series. Because of the current uncertainty about when schools and colleges will re-open fully and the public health restrictions that may be in place, we are not consulting on the exact dates when the exams should take place. If possible, we envisage that AS and A level exams should take place in October and GCSE exams in November, with the exact timing to be confirmed by us, having taken advice from government, the exam boards and groups representing schools, colleges, teachers and students.

The extent to which students will have been able to complete any non-exam assessment (NEA) before schools and colleges closed on 20 March will vary by centre and subject. Similarly, how far it will be possible for students to undertake new non-exam assessments in the autumn will also vary. To be fair to students in these circumstances, we want to explore through our consultation views about NEA. Based on our discussions with exam boards and school and college leaders we are proposing that, with the exception of art and design, grades awarded in the autumn should be based only on students' performance in their exams, with no non-exam assessments. We would welcome feedback on this proposal before we decide on the arrangements for the autumn. The consultation is open until Monday 8 June 2020.

Sally Collier, Chief Regulator, Ofqual, said:

In the unprecedented circumstances we face this summer, these exceptional arrangements are the fairest way of making sure students have the grades they need in time to progress to further study or employment. It is important that students; their parents, carers and teachers; and others who rely on these qualifications, such as universities and employers, have had an opportunity to feed back views. We are also today inviting anyone affected to tell us what they think about our proposals for the additional autumn exam series.

As schools and colleges prepare for the important task of submitting their centre assessment grades and rank order information, I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their professionalism and support in making these judgements objectively and fairly for their students.

# Summer arrangements – consultation decisions

## Who should receive a calculated grade

To give students, schools and colleges certainty at the earliest opportunity, we prioritised and published earlier in May our decisions on 2 proposals about who should receive a calculated grade. This confirmed that students in year 10 and below entered for exams this summer could receive calculated grades. Private candidates can also receive calculated grades if the head of the centre which entered them is confident they can submit a centre assessment grade for the student and rank them alongside their other students.

## Standardising centre assessment grades

To make sure grades are as fair as possible, exam boards will standardise centre assessment grades using a statistical model which will include the expected national outcomes for this year's students, the prior attainment of students at each school and college (at cohort, not individual level), and previous results of the school or college.

Because these arrangements have had to be put in place very quickly due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, it would have been impossible to provide school and college staff with national training to support them in making standardised judgements. As such, it is highly likely that all centres will see some adjustment, in at least one subject, to their centre assessment grades, however carefully they have made their judgements. Such adjustments are in the interests of fairness to all students because they will ensure, as far as possible, that individual centres have not been too severe or too generous in comparison with other centres.

We set out in our consultation a number of proposals about the standardisation model. In light of the feedback we received, we have decided:

- to adopt the aims we set out for model, with which 89% of respondents agreed
- that the standardisation process will place more weight on a centre's historical performance in a subject than the submitted centre assessment grades where that will result in students getting the grades that they would most likely have achieved had they been able to complete their assessments in summer 2020
- that because of the risk of unfairness, the model will not seek to reflect any trends in improvement or deterioration in a centre's outcomes in a subject over previous years (a centre's trajectory)
- to publish further guidance to support centres in making objective judgements, informed by the published literature on the potential for bias in teachers' judgements and input from a number of groups with an interest and expertise in equalities. The majority of people who responded (64%) agreed with our proposal not to modify individual centre rank orders to account for possible bias. We believe this would lead to arbitrary changes to the rank orders provided by centres, because it

would be impossible to know the degree of any bias in centre assessment grades and rankings

## **Appealing calculated grades**

We are committed to doing all that we can to make sure students are not disadvantaged by these unprecedented circumstances, including allowing for an appeal where appropriate. We asked a number of questions about our proposed arrangements for appeals this summer, noting that the usual process – which pre-supposes exams and marking have taken place – cannot happen simply because there are no exam scripts to review or remark. As a result:

- we have confirmed that a student who had evidence of bias or discrimination would be able to raise this with their centre; an exam board could investigate such evidence as indicating malpractice
- we have also decided that, as now, centres must have a procedure which allows students to request that a review is conducted of the centre's decision not to appeal to an exam board
- appeals should be allowed where a centre believes it has made an error when submitting its information; or similarly, if the centre believes an exam board made a mistake when calculating, assigning or communicating a grade

We have given serious consideration as to whether a student could challenge their centre assessment grades and position in their centre's rank order. Responses to our proposals on these issues were mixed and varied by the background of the respondent. For example, the majority of teachers who responded agreed with our proposal that we should not provide for a review or appeal process on the basis of a centre's judgement; whereas the opposite was true for students, parents and carers. We recognise the strength of feeling amongst students, and have weighed carefully whether such an appeal could work fairly. On balance, we have decided it would not be in the interests of all students or the fairness of the arrangements overall because:

- the appeal would have to be undertaken by someone better placed than the student's teachers to judge the grade they would likely have received if the exams had taken place – in the unique circumstances of this summer we do not believe there is any such person
- in addition, if an appeal was to be undertaken before the centre assessment grade and rank order information was submitted to the exam boards, the appeal would require students to have access to the information their school or college submitted. Many teacher respondents have told us, and we agree, that the overall reliability of this year's approach would be compromised if information about centre assessment grades and rank orders was disclosed before being submitted to the exam boards. If one student successfully appealed against their position in the rank order, it would have negative implications for other students who would, in turn, need to be given an opportunity to appeal

We have listened to suggestions about how we could take into account evidence from a centre that it believes shows exceptional circumstances which justify changes in how the standardisation process should apply to its students.

Specifically, where a centre can demonstrate that there has been a significant change in the demographic make-up of its 2020 cohort in a subject which indicates students would have performed better than in previous years, and that using the normal standardisation process as set out would disadvantage this year's students. Proposals to allow this form of appeal may raise problems of either unreliability or unfairness. An appeals mechanism that allowed some centres an unreasonable advantage over others would not be consistent with operating a fair process. However, given the importance of the issue and strength of feeling we are conducting further work to establish if there are reasonable and fair grounds for an appeal of this sort.

We recognise there are concerns that the exceptional arrangements for providing results this summer are less fair than exams, and we have set out how we will address these concerns as far as we can. As many respondents have agreed, these arrangements are fairest in the circumstances and, importantly, will allow most students to progress to the next stage of their lives without further disruption.

## **Other qualifications**

We have published the [outcomes of our consultation on vocational, technical and other general qualifications](#), confirming the exceptional arrangements for awarding these qualifications this summer.

## **Infographic of the awarding process**

PDF, 1.09MB, 1 page

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## **[Exceptional arrangements for awarding qualifications this summer](#)**

News story

Our decisions following consultation for awarding results in GCSEs, AS and A

levels, other general, vocational and technical qualifications.



We are pleased to confirm today, Friday 22 May, that following consultation students will be awarded calculated grades in GCSEs, AS and A levels, the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) and Advanced Extension Award in maths (AEA) this summer, after exams were cancelled in England this summer. The majority of learners taking similar general, vocational or technical qualifications (VTQs) for progress to university or employment will also be issued calculated grades, with adapted assessments in place for many other VTQs.

Sally Collier, Chief Regulator, Ofqual, said:

In the unprecedented circumstances we face this summer, these exceptional arrangements are the fairest way of making sure students have the grades they need in time to progress to further study or employment. It is important that students; their parents, carers and teachers; and others who rely on these qualifications, such as universities and employers, have had an opportunity to feed back views. I would like to thank everyone who has taken the time to respond.

To help navigate the approach for qualifications this summer, [we have launched a new interactive tool](#). The tool allows learners, and the users of these qualifications, to understand what's happening with the qualifications which matter to them. In addition to our consultation decisions, we are also launching today [our consultation on arrangements for an autumn exam series for GCSEs, AS and A levels](#).

## **Documents published today**

**GCSEs, AS and A levels, and Extended Project Qualification and Advanced Extension Award in maths**

**Vocational, technical and other general qualifications**

## Video guides

We have also published an updated film for teachers and another for students to help explain the arrangements this summer.

[Grading in 2020 – information for students](#)

[Update for centres, 22 May 2020: GCSEs, AS, A levels and other qualifications taken for progression](#)

Published 22 May 2020

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## [Ofqual decisions on awarding vocational and technical qualifications this summer](#)

Last month, we launched a consultation on [our proposals for awarding vocational, technical and other general qualifications this summer](#), following disruption to exams and assessments caused by Coronavirus (COVID-19).

We received 1,512 responses and there were high levels of support for our proposals. We are today, Friday 22 May, [confirming that we will be adopting the policy approach we consulted on](#), with [additional guidance and strengthened requirements set out in our extraordinary regulatory framework](#) to take account of feedback received.

Recognising the complexity of the vocational and technical qualifications (VTQ) landscape, we are confirming different approaches will apply to cater for the different categories of qualifications:

- qualifications primarily used for progression to further or higher education. In line with government policy, and like for GCSEs, AS and A levels, where possible, learners should receive calculated results for these qualifications
- qualifications which are primarily used to signal occupational competence. It would not be suitable for these learners to receive a calculated result because it would not be clear they possessed the skills required for the job, which could have health and safety – or other professional – implications. As such, the starting point for these qualifications is for awarding organisations (AOs) to adapt the assessment or delivery model so that assessments can be completed under the current public health restrictions
- qualifications with a mixed purpose may receive either a calculated grade or be awarded based on an adapted assessment. AOs will need to

make a decision based on the qualification's principal purpose and the approach most appropriate to deliver a valid result. We will monitor these arrangements to ensure that an appropriate approach is taken and that, where necessary and possible, there is consistency between awarding organisations

Our regulatory framework sets out clear expectations about the approaches AOs should take in relation to these different categories – with key principles to make sure results remain sufficiently valid and reliable. Only where this is not possible, should assessments be delayed.

To help navigate the approach for VTQs this summer, we have launched [a new interactive tool](#). The tool allows users to search for a specific regulated qualification to find out how results will be generated for the majority of learners.

Sally Collier, Ofqual Chief Regulator, said:

In the vast majority of cases this summer, learners taking other general, vocational and technical qualifications will be able to progress in their studies or employment with calculated grades or having taken an adapted assessment. Our new interactive tool will help learners, and the users of these qualifications, understand what's happening with the qualifications which matter to them, so they have the certainty they need to move on in their lives.

## **Equalities**

In our consultation we set out that we expected AOs to consider how they would minimise disadvantage to vulnerable learners and those with special educational needs or protected characteristics, and to take any appropriate actions. This included managing the risk of bias in the process of calculated grades. Having listened to feedback through our consultation, and from further engagement with groups specialising in these issues, we have published further guidance and have developed our framework to further highlight AOs' responsibilities in relation to equalities.

## **Autumn assessment opportunities**

We proposed that learners unable to receive, or seeking to improve, a result this summer should have an opportunity to take an assessment in the autumn – the majority of respondents agreed. We have listened to concerns about holding assessments during the September to December window. We will require that where AOs normally offer an autumn assessment opportunity, they must take all reasonable steps to continue to do so. Where they do not normally offer an autumn assessment opportunity, they should do so where there are enough learners who need to take an assessment or where it would be unfair not to. We expect AOs to work with providers, and to take decisions in the best interests of learners, with safeguards for us to intervene if we decide there is a particular need for an assessment that is not being met by AOs.

## Appeals

Our existing rules already require AOs to have in place an appeals process and that will apply to decisions made under the extraordinary regulatory framework. We have introduced guidance to the regulatory framework to highlight the issues AOs should consider this summer when handling appeals. The guidance also explains where AOs can align their approach to that being applied to GCSEs, AS and A levels, where qualifications are similar.

## Malpractice

Many of the decisions AOs will need to take this summer will be underpinned by how they intend to manage the risk of malpractice in their qualifications. Given this, and following further engagement with AOs (including, in particular, around situations where risks might be heightened, such as in some overseas delivery) we have set out additional statutory guidance in the regulatory framework which confirms AOs' ongoing malpractice obligations.

## GCSEs, AS and A levels

We have published the [outcomes of our consultation on GCSEs, AS and A levels qualifications](#), confirming the exceptional arrangements for awarding these qualifications this summer.