

CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)



WJEC Qualifications in Northern Ireland - GBA Meets with Education Minister

The GBA met with the Education Minister on 10th March to discuss a recent decision regarding WJEC qualifications and raise the issues brought forward by member schools. Alternative qualifications and the direction of travel in Wales were two of the main areas discussed. The situation will remain under constant review and we will continue to work with the Minister on the matter.

GBA Executive Committee Meets with New Chairperson of Education Authority

Mr Barry Mulholland, recently appointed Chairperson of the Education Authority Board, joined yesterday's GBA Executive Meeting for an introduction and informal discussion. Barry set out some of the challenges facing the education sector such as the current pandemic and school restart, tackling underachievement, SEN pressures, Area Planning and finance.

As part of our wider stakeholder engagement, the GBA Executive Committee has invited Dr Mark Browne, new Permanent Secretary for the Department of Education, to the next meeting being held on 28th April 2021.

Teaching & Non-Teaching Vacancies

The GBA provides a free advertising service for our member schools. Job vacancies are posted on our website and Twitter page. There is also a link to our job listings on the Education Authority website in the job opportunities section.

As we are currently receiving a high volume of job requests, please use our [job template](#) and allow one working day for posts to be uploaded. This does not include bank holidays and weekends.

If you would like us to host a vacancy for your school, please [contact us](#).



GBA Easter Office Closure Dates

Please note that our office will be closed from **2nd April to 9th April 2021** inclusive.

Northern Ireland Assembly Updates

This week the Education Committee received a briefing from the Minister on school restart. The Minister emphasised that education has never stopped and has continued remotely, and tribute was paid to school staff for their work and dedication. Topics discussed included COVID-19 mitigations, school transport, clinically extremely vulnerable pupils and lateral flow testing. You can view the session [here](#).

The Committee met again yesterday and heard briefings from GTCNI, DE and CCEA. The full session is available [here](#). The Northern Ireland Assembly will be in recess from 27th March until 11th April 2021.

CCEA Update

We received the following information from CCEA and have been asked to share this with our schools:

On 6 January 2021, the Minister of Education, Peter Weir MLA, cancelled all CCEA GCSE, AS and A2 examinations scheduled for January, February, May and June 2021. Instead, by Formal Direction of the Minister dated 2 March 2021, the approach to awarding grades in Summer 2021 will be based on teacher professional judgements, with moderation.

Since the announcement, CCEA representatives have worked with all schools, including voluntary grammar schools to provide the necessary advice and guidance to support implementation of alternative arrangements for awarding Summer 2021 and the voluntary grammar schools have engaged meaningfully throughout. CCEA has developed a five-step process, which is set out in the document, *GCSE, AS and A Level Awarding Summer 2021: Alternative Arrangements – Process for Heads of Centre*. Discussions with schools, including those in the voluntary grammar sector will continue as teachers and school leaders prepare for the submission of Centre Determined Grades for each student.

As part of the support package for Summer 2021, CCEA partnered with the Chartered Institute of Educational Assessors (CIEA) to deliver a programme to schools and colleges to support fairness and consistency in alternative awarding arrangements. This programme was optional; however, it was designed to help centres develop a shared understanding of the process of arriving at judgements and reinforce existing knowledge and understanding in assessment. On completion of the training, attendees should act as Lead Assessors in their centre and disseminate the content of the programme to colleagues. Their role will be in quality assuring the process required to produce fair and robust judgements for Summer 2021. The training programme was comprised of the following four modules:

- The Validity Chain;
- Standardisation and Moderation;
- Using Data; and
- The 2021 Process.

CCEA subject-specific guidance and subject-specific webinars will also be

provided to support centres at Head of Department and subject teacher level. The support guidance and webinars will reconfirm earlier examination policies, such as the omission of units at GCSE and A level. They will also include information on how to adapt CCEA assessment resources to manage content not covered due to COVID disruption, grade descriptors and determining grades that do not have grade descriptors, using the CCEA assessment resources and application of mark schemes.

Access will also be provided to existing support which may be used in checking understanding of qualification standards (demand and performance), such as past papers, mark schemes, grade boundaries, Chief Examiner's reports, Principal Moderator's reports, agreement trials, exemplification of examination performance, CCEA Analytics and specimen assessment materials.

CCEA has had a positive response from voluntary grammar schools to date and looks forward to continuing to provide support. If you have any queries regarding CCEA support, please contact Jayne FitzGerald on the following email address: jfitzgerald@ccea.org.uk

SEN Frameworks Consultations Ending Soon



The consultation on two draft Special Educational Needs Frameworks closes on **Monday 12th of April at 5pm**. Find out more [here](#).

Area Planning

As you will be aware, the GBA represents voluntary grammar schools on the various Area Planning Groups. Discussions regarding the next Strategic Area

Plans are underway. If you have an idea for area solutions in your location please [contact us](#).

Shared Education

GBA will be engaging with the Education Authority and Department Officials regarding Shared Education. If you would like any views taken forward or have any comments, [please get in touch](#).

Newsletter Subscription

Please feel free to forward our monthly updates to your school Governors. If any of your Governors would like to subscribe, please [send us](#) their email address.

If you wish to unsubscribe to these emails, please [let us know](#).

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