

Construction of the common timetable FSMQ, GCE and GCSE qualifications

Introduction

The FSMQ, GCE and GCSE awarding bodies produce common timetables, covering all subjects, for the benefit of both candidates and centres. The common timetable, supported by the JCQ publication *Instructions for conducting examinations*, acts in the best interests of candidates.

Common timetables are constructed for the November GCSE examination series and the June FSMQ, GCE and GCSE examination series.

An examination component may be scheduled at any point within the agreed timetable period, subject to the criteria listed on **pages 4 and 5** of this document. It **must not** be assumed that an individual subject or component will be timetabled based on historical arrangements.

Details of when each series will begin and end, and when results are published, are shown in the table below.

	Series	
	November 2020	June 2021
When does the series begin?	Monday 2 November 2020	Friday 14 May 2021† †For centres in Wales and Northern Ireland this will be from Wednesday 12 May 2021 onwards.
When does the series end?	The November 2020 series will last for two weeks	The June 2021 series will last for seven weeks excluding the Spring Bank Holiday half-term
When are the results released to candidates?	Thursday 14 January 2021	FSMQ and GCE qualifications: Thursday 19 August 2021 GCSE qualifications: Thursday 26 August 2021

Information on how the common timetable is produced can be found on **pages 4 and 5**.

Schedule for publishing examination timetables and receiving feedback from centres during the academic year

GCSE November series

The awarding bodies will publish on-line provisional timetables for the following year's November GCSE examination series by no later than 31 October.

Centres are given the opportunity to comment on the provisional November GCSE timetable.

Comments, observations or suggested amendments to the timetable **must** reach the JCQ Office **no later than 30 November**, for consideration by the JCQ Common Timetable Working Group.

The JCQ Common Timetable Working Group will carefully consider comments received from centres.

The common timetable will be finalised by no later than 31 January. Each awarding body will then publish its final GCSE November timetable by this date.

FSMQ, GCE and GCSE June examination series

The awarding bodies will publish on-line provisional timetables for the following year's June examination series by no later than 28 February.

Centres are given the opportunity to comment on the provisional June timetable.

Comments, observations or suggested amendments to the timetable **must** reach the JCQ Office **no later than 30 April**, for consideration by the JCQ Common Timetable Working Group.

The JCQ Common Timetable Working Group will carefully consider comments received from centres.

The common timetable will be finalised by no later than 30 June. Each awarding body will then publish its final FSMQ, GCE and GCSE June timetables by this date.

Contact details: centresupport@jcq.org.uk

Key dates

	GCSE November series	FSMQ, GCE and GCSE June series
Provisional timetable published by:	31 October	28 February
Comments from centres to be received by:	30 November	30 April
Final timetable published by:	31 January	30 June

Where are the timetables published?

Each awarding body publishes examination timetables on their website:

www.aqa.org.uk

www.ccea.org.uk

<http://qualifications.pearson.com>

www.ocr.org.uk

www.wjec.co.uk

The JCQ Common Timetable Working Group will work to the following business rules when producing the common timetable:

1. The awarding bodies will collectively agree subject slots within the common timetable for each **FSMQ, GCE and GCSE subject specification**. These common slots will determine the date and session to be used for each examination component. In some instances, an awarding body may require additional slots for its papers for a given **FSMQ, GCE or GCSE** specification.
2. When deciding these subject slots, the awarding bodies will consider subject combinations using statistical data from previous series and feedback from centres. **The common timetable will take note of the timetabling arrangements for FSMQ, GCE and GCSE qualifications in order to reduce potential timetable clashes.**
3. The awarding bodies will try to minimise timetable clashes and accommodation problems for centres. However, given the size and complexity of the common timetable, timetable clashes will be inevitable. Guidance on managing timetable clashes within centres can be found in **section 7 of the JCQ publication *Instructions for conducting examinations*** – <http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations>
4. Examinations will be scheduled during standard term times and cannot take account of individual school or college closures. The awarding bodies will not schedule examinations for a weekend or a Bank Holiday.
5. Core GCSE† subjects will not be timetabled for the Friday afternoon session before half-term. This is to ensure that as many scripts as possible are despatched prior to the half-term break.
6. To reflect centres' preferences GCE AS papers will be timetabled before GCE A2 and A-level papers.
7. GCSE English Language, English Literature, Mathematics, Science and Welsh Language examinations will not be timetabled together in the same morning or afternoon session. No other GCSE subject will be timetabled against any one of these subjects.
8. GCSE English Language and GCSE English Literature examinations will be timetabled in separate weeks. The same principle will apply to GCSE Welsh 1st Language and GCSE Welsh Literature examinations.
9. Large entry GCE and GCSE Modern Foreign Languages examinations, i.e. French, German and Spanish, and GCSE Welsh 2nd Language, will not be timetabled together in the same session.
10. Large entry GCSE Modern Foreign Languages examinations, i.e. French, German and Spanish, and GCSE Welsh 2nd Language, will not be timetabled on consecutive days in order to provide candidates with enough time to switch between languages.
11. To reflect centres' preferences the common designated slots for GCSE English Language, GCSE English Literature, GCSE Mathematics and GCSE Science examinations will be timetabled in morning sessions.
12. The last day of the common timetable will be used for contingency purposes. The designation of a 'contingency day' within the common timetable is in the event of widespread, sustained national or local disruption to examinations. It is part of the awarding bodies' standard contingency planning for examinations and is consistent with the qualification regulators' document *Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland* - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/exam-system-contingency-plan-england-wales-and-northern-ireland>

†Core GCSE subjects are GCSE English Language, English Literature, French, Geography, German, History, Mathematics, Science, Spanish, Welsh 1st Language and Welsh Literature.

The JCQ Common Timetable Working Group when producing the common timetable will seek to:

1. Timetable large entry subjects as early as possible to facilitate marking and subsequently the accurate and timely release of examination results;
2. Timetable GCE AS examinations in Weeks 1-3 of the timetable and GCE A2 and A-level examinations in Weeks 2-6 of the timetable;
3. Timetable large entry GCE and GCSE Modern Foreign Languages examinations, i.e. French, German and Spanish, in morning sessions;
4. Take account of religious festivals. However, the awarding bodies will be unable to avoid timetabling examinations on such days. The common timetable will take account of Armistice Day in November.