



Examinations and qualifications guide

Home-educated young people are not required to take formal exams unless they choose to. Their learning journey can be tailored to their individual needs and goals. You may base these on your child's future aspirations. For example:

- Does your child wish to go onto college and if so, what course would they like to do?
- What do they want to do beyond statutory school age?

If you can identify what path your child wishes to take, then you'll be able to determine what exams they will need.

Booking the exams

Home educated young people will sit exams as private candidates. You will need to contact an exam centre to register your child as a private candidate to sit their exams. There will be a charge for the examinations, and you may also be charged an admin fee by the exam centre.

The Joint Council for Qualifications has published a searchable directory of examination centres that take private candidates for the summer:

[View the directory of examination centres for private candidates \(opens in new window\)\(opens new window\).](#)

The centre links in the directory will provide more information. This includes whether they are offering remote assessment.

It's sensible to make enquiries from the autumn before the summer of exam sitting and certainly no later than January. You may consider sitting GCSE examinations when resits are available in November, not all exam boards offer this option so you would need to check with the examination board. You should clarify your child's subjects, boards, tiers and any special access requirements at the earliest opportunity.

Access arrangements may include:

- **Additional time** for pupils who need longer to process information or complete tasks.
- **Rest breaks** to help manage fatigue or anxiety.
- **Readers or scribes** for pupils with reading or writing difficulties.
- **Modified test materials**, such as large print or braille.
- **Alternative formats or settings**, such as separate rooms or use of assistive technology

Further information

You may find the links below helpful for support:

- [HE Exams Wiki](#)
- [Ed Yourself exam officers FAQ](#)
- [4 steps to taking GCSEs or IGCSEs as a home educator \(Learn What You Live\)](#)
- [Access Arrangements, Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration - JCQ Joint Council for Qualifications](#)

Exam specifications and exam boards

Top tips for organising exams:

- Find out what exam board/GCSE your child was studying while at school (if applicable)

- Work out whether your child should enter the foundation or higher paper:
 - Higher tier is for candidates predicted to achieve grades 4-9 (old style C-A**)
 - Foundation is for candidates expected to achieve grades 1-5 (old style G-C)
- Visit individual exam board websites once you have decided which one to use. You'll find lots of free guidance, including subject specifications.

Difference between GCSE and iGCSEs

Many GCSEs taken in schools and colleges include coursework or assessments. Teachers or assessors will mark these.

Many home educating children take iGCSEs (i=international) examinations. This type of GCSE is exam-based only and does not include any coursework. Here are a few exam boards that offer iGCSEs:

- [AQA](#)
- [Edexcel](#)
- [Cambridge International Examinations](#)
- [Oxford Cambridge and RSA \(OCR\)](#)

Functional Skills

Functional Skills in English and Maths are an alternative to GCSEs. They focus on workplace literacy and numeracy and you can access them from Entry Level up to Level 2.

You can sometimes book exams and complete them online at home.

To give an indication of levels, a Level 2 Functional Skills pass is equal to a Grade 4 at GCSE. The following links offer more information about Functional Skills:

- [What are Functional Skills Qualifications? - Twinkl](#)
- [Open Learn - Everyday Maths and English](#)
- [Skills Workshop - English](#)
- [City and Guilds - Skills for Work and Life](#)
- [Pass Functional Skills | Ofqual Regulated Exams & Courses](#)

For young people aged 16 to 24, who have finished statutory education, [Youth Employment Hub – Herefordshire Council](#), is a local hub is dedicated to helping with employment, education or training.