

**External Assessment Timetable –**

**Comments and Outcomes Publication 2022/23**

**Background**

Each year we timetable new assessment dates/windows for the academic session, two years in advance of the current session. For example, in the 2021/22 session, we would timetable and publish new assessment dates for the 2023/24 session. This ensures we provide centres with a minimum of 2 years’ worth of external assessment opportunities to book their learners onto.

Our approach is consistent with the approach taken by JCQ when constructing their Common Timetable, in that we actively seek out centre comment and feedback on our provisional dates before they’re confirmed and published on our website.

**Opportunity to comment**

When setting the 2023/24 external assessment dates, we opened a period of consultation to enable centres to share their comments and feedback on the provisional dates chosen. This period of consultation ran from April until May 2021. This period was highlighted through various channels including newsletters, websites and social media. We followed this with a follow-up consultation on changes proposed from the initial responses. This took place in June 2022.

For details on how and when the External Assessment Timetable is constructed, please refer to our Construction of the External Assessment publication on our website.

**Outcome**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Comments received by NCFE** | **Number of centres** | **Type of centre** |
| 8 | 8 | 5 Schools  3 Further Education Colleges |

**Principal comments**

* **601/8435/8 NCFE CACHE Technical Level 3 Extended Diploma in Health and Social Care (HSC/SAE and HSED2)**

These summer assessments clash with the T level Employer Set Project which has its assessment window during this time. This is not fair on staff and learners as we have high student numbers and require rooms and staff to support. Could these be moved slightly earlier in the month to accommodate all the other external timetable exams?

**Response**

Moving these assessments, as suggested, earlier in the month would negatively impact centres and learners in 2 ways; reducing the preparation time for the summer assessments, and significantly impacting the time interval between results release for the previous assessment opportunity, and the booking cut-off and assessment dates for the summer opportunity. In each case, these gaps are currently only a few calendar days, so reducing these would disadvantage centres and learners having to book onto and undertake future assessments while still awaiting a result from their previous attempt. For centres in positions such as these, where there are internal pressures on resourcing arising from competing assessments, we would strongly encourage an Assessment Variation request be submitted, on behalf of one of the competing assessments, to ease the burden on centre resources.

* **601/6777/4 and 601/6774/9 NCFE Level 1/2 Technical Award in Music Technology**

We appreciate this year has been extended to a three-week window because of the pandemic. Would it be possible to have a longer window (maybe even two weeks) just to provide some additional flexibility for centres in resource planning and continuing adaptations?

**Response**

The window for this assessment was extended from 1 week to 3 weeks in 2021/22 for 2 reasons; firstly, as an adaptation to aid centres and learners in delivery difficulty throughout the pandemic and, secondly, as an extension of only 1 week would overlap the summer half-term period for most centres. Continuing this approach by bringing the assessment date forward would, as above, limit the gap between results release for the spring window and the booking cut-off and assessment dates for the summer opportunity. Delaying the assessment date would impact on results release, and potentially mean that results would not be received until beyond the traditional published date for most equivalent qualifications, in preparation for future learning. For centres in positions such as these, where there are internal pressures on resourcing arising from competing assessments, again, we would strongly encourage an Assessment Variation request be submitted, on behalf of one of the competing assessments, to ease the burden on centre resources.

* **601/8437/1 NCFE CACHE Technical Level 3 Diploma in Childcare and Education (DCE2) (and many other qualifications in a similar position)**

As results are only released in early May, we would never have the time to get results back of an Enquiry About a Result before determining if any of our learners are required to re-sit. Would this be something which would be considered when planning the timetable?

**Response**

NCFE acknowledge that, for some of our qualifications that follow the pattern of spring and summer attempts, the gap from results release of the spring sitting until the booking cut-off and assessment dates for the summer sitting is far from ideal for centres, particularly if, as the question indicates, Enquiries About a Result (clerical checking and reviews of marking) are made for the previous sitting, which are subject to internal timescales of 30 working days for resolution.

For this reason, NCFE undertook a secondary, follow-up consultation exercise with centres, proposing that, for the qualifications below, **and for the 2023/24 assessment series only**, there be an amendment to either the spring or summer assessment dates, to alleviate this problem.

Qualifications in Scope

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| NCFE Level 1 and Level 2 Technical Awards in Interactive Media (603/0851/5 and 603/0852/7) |
| NCFE Level 1 and Level 2 Technical Awards in Graphic Design (603/0844/8 and 603/0845/X) |
| NCFE CACHE Technical Level 3 Diploma in Childcare and Education (Early Years Educator) (601/8437/1) |
| NCFE CACHE Technical Level 3 Certificate in Childcare and Education (Early Years Educator (601/8436/X) |
| NCFE CACHE Technical Level 3 Diploma in Early Years Education and Care (Early Years Educator) (601/8438/3) |
| NCFE CACHE Technical Level 3 Diploma in Early Years Education and Care (Early Years Educator) 601/8438/3) |
| NCFE CACHE Technical Level 3 Certificate in Health and Social Care (601/8434/6) |
| NCFE CACHE Technical Level 3 Extended Diploma in Health and Social Care (601/8435/8) |

In each of the cases above, the assessment dates have now been amended, either by bringing the spring window forward, or by delaying the summer assessment dates, so that we maximise the gap between the completion of the spring window (allowing for any post-results service requirements) and the initiation of the summer window. Maximising this gap does not alter the timeframes by which Enquiries About a Result are resolved, but it will increase the likelihood of a resolution before the subsequent assessment begins, if not before the booking cut-off date.