

Securing Student Outcomes

Engagement Guidelines for Examination Contingency 2026



Our Shared Commitment to Dubai's Students

On 16 March 2026, the Indian Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) announced the cancellation of board examinations across the Middle East. This was followed by the International Baccalaureate (IB) also cancelling its May 2026 session across the Middle East on 30 March 2026. Within days, Cambridge Assessment International Education, Pearson Edexcel, Oxford AQA and CISCE followed. As of 13 April 2026, confirmed cancellations have affected several curriculum pathways operating in Dubai's private school sector.

Tens of thousands of Dubai's students – who have studied for two or more years towards these qualifications – now face alternative assessment routes that vary in methodology, evidence requirements and timescales.

KHDA's role is clear. We are here to support every school navigating these contingency arrangements and to ensure that every student's effort and achievement is protected. This Guide sets out that commitment.

Why this Guide?

No school in Dubai should have to navigate examination contingency alone. Whether you are part of a large school group or a standalone school, perhaps following a less common curriculum pathway, KHDA is here to ensure you have the guidance and practical help you need to support your teachers, students and families through this.

What KHDA Will Do

Through this Guide, KHDA commits to the following:

Clarity

By updating this guide, we shall publish and maintain clear, regularly updated information so that no school is uncertain about what is expected.

The Examination Board Reference section of this Guide, updated at least twice a week, sets out the current position of every affected examination board operating in Dubai, including evidence requirements, deadlines and required actions.

We are, of course, at the mercy of publicly available information, but we shall endeavour to validate it when unsure of its source. Our efforts to support should not replace your own engagement with your relevant examination boards. Please continue to engage with them and let us know if you come across any relevant updates that may not be reflected in this guide.

Responsive Support

Where a school's principal or assessment lead reaches out to KHDA for support, we will endeavour to assist directly or, where specialist expertise is required, try to connect them with experienced colleagues in other schools or groups who can help.

This is particularly important for standalone or smaller schools that may have limited internal experience or expertise in a particular board's contingency process.

Student WellBeing

We place student anxiety, mental health, inclusion and confidence at the centre of every action.

We will support schools in communicating clearly with families, ensuring that all students, including students of determination, understand how their results will be determined and that concerns about university recognition are addressed proactively.

Who This Guide Is For

This Guide is addressed to every private school in Dubai, across all curricula. It is particularly intended for:

- Schools directly affected by confirmed examination cancellations (IB, Cambridge CAIE, Pearson Edexcel, Oxford AQA, CBSE and CISCE) who are now compiling evidence portfolios, submitting marks or managing alternative assessment processes under tight deadlines
- Many schools, notably those that are not part of a larger group, may require additional support in interpreting board guidance, supporting students and families and/or managing contingency processes.
- Schools following curricula where no cancellation has been announced but where distance-learning arrangements are affecting internal assessments, end-of-year examinations or graduation requirements
- Schools awaiting announcements from examination boards that have not yet confirmed their position

What We Ask of Schools

KHDA will provide support, coordination and advocacy. In return, we ask schools to:

- Heighten awareness of requirements and meet every board deadline without exception – the evidence submissions and mark uploads required by each board are non-negotiable and directly determine student outcomes
- Communicate clearly and compassionately with students and families – explain how results will be determined, what the timeline looks like, where to go with questions and how parents can help to reassure their children and help them where possible in their part of evidencing their accomplishments.
- Designate a named assessment lead and a named student liaison for examination contingency matters – so that KHDA, students and families each have a clear point of contact

- Inform KHDA promptly of any board communication received, any deadline difficulty encountered or any area where additional support is needed
- Reach out to KHDA if you need help – whether with interpreting board guidance, managing an unfamiliar contingency process or connecting with experienced colleagues in other schools
- Where there is a high level of expertise or experience in managing examination contingencies, consider being available to support other schools with advice and guidance.

Supporting Student WellBeing

Tens of thousands of students across Dubai are navigating one of the most stressful periods of their academic lives under circumstances they could never have anticipated. Their anxiety is real: fear that alternative grades will be seen as lesser; uncertainty about whether years of preparation will be fairly reflected; worry about university recognition; and the broader stress of a regional security situation affecting their families and daily lives.

Schools should take particular care to acknowledge before they reassure. The evidence on effective crisis communication is clear: students need to feel heard before they can hear reassurance. Vague platitudes increase anxiety; specific, factual information reduces it.

KHDA will:

- Ensure every communication issued to schools includes explicit guidance on supporting students through the contingency process, in age-appropriate and anxiety-reducing language
- Compile and circulate a Student FAQ addressing the most common concerns, including how results will be determined, university acceptance and the appeals process
- Request that schools actively seek student voice – through their own student leadership and councils – to ensure the support offered reflects what students actually need
- Ask that schools offer practical guidance to families on how they can keep themselves abreast of the situation and support their own children through this period.

Schools should also give particular attention to students whose family circumstances have been directly affected by the regional conflict, students for whom English is an additional language, and students with pre-existing mental health conditions.

Supporting Students of Determination

Students of determination – those with special educational needs and disabilities – require particular attention during examination contingency.

Disruption to established routines, changes in assessment methodology and the move to distance learning can be especially challenging, particularly for students with moderate to high needs; schools must ensure that contingency arrangements do not inadvertently disadvantage them.

Examination Accommodations and Access Arrangements

Schools must ensure that all access arrangements and accommodations that were in place for examinations are reflected in the contingency assessment process. This includes:

- Extra time, rest breaks and modified papers where ‘sample/mock’ assessments are being sought by an examination board.
- Use of a reader, scribe or assistive technology
- Proposing to the examination board a modified or alternative evidence format where a student’s disability affects the type of evidence they can produce.

Where examination boards require specific applications for access arrangements under contingency (for example, IB Inclusive Access Arrangements), schools should submit these without delay.

Supporting Engagement During a Distance Learning Period

For students of determination who are accessing education through distance or home-based learning, schools should consider:

- Whether the student can engage meaningfully with their part in assessment-replacement and pulling together a required evidence base of their accomplishments without direct, in-person support – and where they cannot, what additional arrangements are needed
- Whether Individual Learning Support Assistants or other support staff can be deployed to the home environment, within appropriate safeguarding and professional boundaries
- Whether communication, regulation and sensory supports are available and accessible in the home setting
- Whether the student's wellbeing and emotional state are being actively monitored, recognising that some students of determination may find it harder to articulate distress or ask for help, in particular when their future qualifications may be at stake.

Evidencing Achievement

Schools should ensure that the evidence compiled for students of determination is fair, representative and reflective of what the student has genuinely achieved.

This means:

- Selecting evidence that demonstrates the student's capability, not just their compliance with a standard format
- Ensuring that where a student's work has been supported by an ILSA or other assistant, the evidence clearly reflects the student's own understanding and ability
- Providing contextual information to examination boards where a student's disability may have affected the nature, volume or format of available evidence
- Applying the same rigour and care to evidence selection for students of determination as for all other students – these students deserve to have their accomplishments recognised on equal terms

Schools that need specialist guidance on supporting students of determination through examination contingency should contact the KHDA team.

University Recognition

One of the greatest sources of student anxiety is the fear that universities will not accept contingency-awarded grades. This concern is understandable and KHDA takes it seriously.

KHDA will:

- Work with the UAE Ministry of Education to communicate directly with universities in the UAE and key international destinations, explaining the regional situation and the rigour of alternative assessment processes
- Engage directly with admissions offices at the most common destination universities for Dubai's students
- Compile evidence from previous contingency cycles – notably the 2020–21 COVID period – to demonstrate that alternative grades are accepted and recognised globally
- Provide schools with template language for use in references, transcripts and university communications

Schools and families can also make direct contact with either of the following persons at IDP for reassurance and support:

<p>Main contact: Sabina Crasto Associate Director- SP Operations Phone +971507869061 sabina.crasto@idp.com</p>	<p>Secondary Contact: Neetu Singh Assistant Business Development Manager Phone +971582583636 Email address: neetu.singh@idp.com</p>
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How to Engage with KHDA

If your school needs support at any point during the examination contingency period, KHDA is here to help.

Whether you need clarification on an examination board's requirements, assistance with an unfamiliar contingency process, for us to broker additional support or simply want to talk through your approach, please send an email to rpc@khda.gov.ae.

Compiling Evidence

General Principles for All Examination Boards

Each examination board has its own specific requirements for evidencing students' accomplishments and what their likely outcomes would have been had they been able to sit their examinations.

Schools must always refer to the board's own published guidance for detailed specifications.

However, the principles below are common to all boards and provide a sound foundation for any evidence compilation process.

Selecting and Presenting Evidence

The quality of evidence submitted will directly influence how examination boards determine student grades. Schools should approach portfolio compilation with the same rigour they would apply to any formal examination process. Every piece of evidence included should clearly demonstrate what a student knows, understands and can do in the subject.

- Select work that genuinely represents the student's own ability - not their best-supported or most heavily scaffolded work, but their most authentic and independent performance.
- Unless guided otherwise by the board, include a range of evidence types where the board permits: timed assessments, extended writing, practical work, coursework, oral recordings and project-based work all contribute to a rounded picture of capability.
- Ensure that the evidence covers the breadth of the specification or syllabus, not just the topics in which a student performed well. Be guided by them, however boards will typically be looking for coverage across assessment objectives.
- Present evidence clearly and professionally: label every piece with the student's name, candidate number, subject, date of completion the conditions under which it was produced and any other requirements that you are asked to fulfil.

- Where evidence has been produced under supervised, timed conditions (pre-crisis), state this explicitly. Boards typically place greater weight on work completed in controlled settings. If evidence generated online is being submitted, you might be expected to explain your proctoring arrangements

Conducting Mock Examinations

Several boards have indicated that mock/past paper examinations sat under formal conditions are among the strongest forms of evidence a school can submit. Where schools are running mock or sample examinations as part of the contingency process, the following principles should generally apply:

- Use past papers, specimen papers or board-approved assessment materials wherever possible. Where a school has created its own papers, ensure these are closely aligned to the board's published specification and mark scheme.
- Record the date, duration, proctoring conditions and any access arrangements applied for each sitting. This documentation may be required by the board.
- Ensure that students of determination receive all access arrangements and accommodations they would have received in the formal examination – extra time, rest breaks, use of a reader or scribe (online if completed remotely), modified papers and assistive technology.

Marking, Moderation and Quality Assurance

The credibility of school-submitted evidence depends on robust marking and internal moderation.

Boards will likely scrutinise grades and may request evidence of the processes schools have followed. Schools should ensure:

- All student work is marked accurately against the board's published mark schemes or carefully created internal schemes - including the use of well-informed grade boundaries. Mark schemes should only be submitted if requested.
- Internal moderation takes place for every subject: a sample of marked work should be reviewed by a second teacher or subject leader to verify consistency and accuracy of

marking before any grades are submitted. Again, only submit internal moderation details if requested to do so.

- Where a school has only one teacher for a subject, consider seeking external moderation from a colleague at another school or contact KHDA for support in connecting with an experienced practitioner.
- Maintain a clear audit trail: keep all original student work, mark schemes used, moderation records and any correspondence with the examination board. This documentation may be needed for appeals.
- Complete and submit any required declaration forms - most boards require a Head of Centre declaration confirming that evidence is authentic, that marks have been quality assured and that the school has followed the board's contingency process.

Working with Your Examination Board

Each board will have slightly different expectations as to how evidence should be presented, what formats are acceptable and what supporting documentation is required. The general principles above provide a solid foundation, but schools must contact their relevant examination board directly for the specific details of their contingency requirements.

Key areas where boards differ include:

- The number and type of evidence pieces required per candidate per subject
- Whether a rationale document or teacher commentary is required alongside the evidence
- The digital format and upload platform for submission
- Deadlines for submission and any extension provisions
- The role of predicted grades – some boards use them as supporting context, others as a primary input

Examination Board Reference

This section is a living reference.

It is reviewed and updated at least twice a week as further information is received from examination boards.

The current version date is shown in the header of this document. Schools should always refer to the latest version available on the KHDA website.

International Baccalaureate (IB)

EXAMINATIONS CANCELLED – Non-Exam Contingency Measure (NECM) in effect

Assessment method

Results calculated from externally assessed coursework, teacher-predicted grades and internal assessment scores. IB moderates all outcomes. No written examinations.

Key deadlines

15 April	All outstanding coursework submitted to IB – extended from 15 March
Not Yet Released	Predicted grades deadline – suggest preparing for shortly after 15 April

What schools must do

Submit all coursework and internal assessments; ensure predicted grades are accurate, evidenced and submitted via Programme Resource Centre; apply for Inclusive Access Arrangements where needed; communicate options to students (transfer, deferral, withdrawal).

Results day: 6 July 2026

Further guidance

IB Programme Resource Centre – updated teacher guidance available; MYP guidance expected imminently.

ibo.org/news/news-about-the-ib/update-on-may-2026-examination-session-in-the-middle-east/

Cambridge Assessment International Education (CAIE)

EXAMINATIONS CANCELLED – Portfolio of evidence route confirmed

Assessment method

Portfolio of evidence. Schools submit three pieces of evidence per candidate per syllabus, together with a Rationale Document for each syllabus. Portfolios are externally marked by Cambridge examiners. Evidence may include past papers, mock examinations, coursework, classwork or any work completed during the course of study. Forecast grades must also be submitted via Direct, assigned as if candidates were going to take exams (not as a grading of the portfolio evidence).

Key deadlines

17 April	Late entries deadline and last date to self-manage withdrawals via Direct.
18 April	All entries automatically moved to the portfolio of evidence route.
1 May	Portfolio submission opens via Submit for Assessment. Coursework already submitted to Cambridge may be resubmitted from this date.

Full submission deadlines published on Cambridge's portfolio of evidence – June 2026 webpage.

Withdrawals: extended to seven days after the end of the exam series (credit for syllabus fee; additional late fees not credited). After 17 April, contact Cambridge to arrange withdrawals.

What schools must do

Assemble three pieces of evidence per candidate per syllabus, covering the range of syllabus content and assessment objectives. Submit via Submit for Assessment with a Rationale Document for each syllabus. Submit forecast grades via Direct (as if candidates were sitting exams). Complete Head of Centre declarations.

Retain all coursework, speaking tests and non-exam assessments as portfolio evidence – do not submit these separately. Securely store all June 2026 confidential materials in accordance with Cambridge Handbook regulations; these must not be used to create portfolio evidence.

Apply access arrangements to any mock or past-paper evidence and keep records.

For A Level carry-forward candidates, provide previous entry details as normal. Private candidates must be treated in the same way as centre candidates.

Attend the Cambridge webinar on 21 or 23 April for detailed guidance.

IGCSE note

For tiered syllabuses, Cambridge will move all candidates (Core and Extended) to a single, untiered portfolio entry option. Candidates can access the full grade range A* to G (or 9 to 1).

Evidence may cover Core content, Extended content, or a mixture, and should be representative of the candidate's demonstrated level of performance.

AS and A Level note

Candidates on a 'best of both' entry option will be moved to a staged portfolio route. Schools wishing to switch to a linear option must amend entries before 17 April (or email Cambridge after that date) and submit six pieces of evidence (three AS, three A2).

The 13-month carry-forward rule is extended: marks from June 2025 may be carried forward to November 2026 for candidates who withdraw due to the conflict, provided they re-enter for the same components.

November 2026 entry fees will be held at June 2026 rates for deferred candidates.

Cambridge Primary and Lower Secondary Checkpoint

Portfolio of evidence and special consideration are not available for Checkpoint qualifications. The next Checkpoint test series starts mid-May 2026.

Schools may withdraw candidates up to seven days after the end of the test series to receive a syllabus fee credit, but may wish to wait in case the tests proceed as planned.

Further guidance

info@cambridgeinternational.org

Cambridge's 'Collecting a portfolio of evidence' guide and 'Submitting a portfolio of evidence' administrative guide are both available on the Cambridge website.

Pearson Edexcel – International A Level and International GCSE

EXAMINATIONS CANCELLED – Contingency arrangements being finalised

Assessment method

Two routes

1. Special consideration/enhanced grading for students with banked unit results.
2. International Contingency Grading based on portfolio of evidence for students without banked units.

Key deadlines

Two-week extension granted for NEA, practical and speaking assessments – relative to your original deadlines.

Evidence submission window closes on 12 June 2026. Further operational detail available from Pearson.

What schools must do

Begin collecting evidence now (Pearson's strong advice); contact the Regional Development Manager for country-specific updates; monitor Pearson's dedicated support page.

IGCSE note

Same contingency framework anticipated.

Students in Year 11 may need clear, student-friendly guidance on evidence compilation.

Mock examinations likely to form central evidence.

Further guidance

qualifications.pearson.com/en/campaigns/support-for-centres-affected-by-the-conflict-in-the-middle-east.html

Oxford AQA International Qualifications

EXAMINATIONS CANCELLED – Evidence submission window: 1 May – 12 June 2026

Assessment method

Students with banked results: previous results used. Banked results may be used as part of the evidence base, not always automatically as the final grade.

Students without: schools submit evidence for examiner review. Evidence must be internally quality assured

Must follow Oxford AQA evidence requirements (e.g. range, recency, authenticity)

Deferral available.

Key deadlines

21 April	Withdrawal deadline – schools must begin decisions NOW.
1 May – 12 June	Digital evidence submission window.

What schools must do

- Identify candidates by category (banked / no banked / non-certifying).
- Prepare and internally quality assure digital evidence in line with board requirements.
- Complete Head of Centre declaration.
- Finalise withdrawal and deferral decisions by 21 April.

IGCSE note

Same evidence submission window applies. The 21 April withdrawal deadline is particularly critical for GCSE entries.

Further guidance

oxfordaqa.com/news/gulf-and-middle-east-region-support/

CBSE – Class 12 and Class 10

EXAMINATIONS CANCELLED¹ – Mark upload deadline: 8–17 APRIL 2026

CBSE does not always make publicly visible all the arrangements that they plan to make in challenging circumstances such as these. Ensure that you carefully read all communications sent directly to the school.

Assessment method

Alternative assessment based on internal school data: best scores from quarterly, half-yearly and pre-board assessments.

Practical and internal assessment marks unchanged.

Key deadlines:

6–13 April: mark upload window (check with CBSE whether this window has closed).

Marks cannot be amended after submission.

What schools must do

Upload all theory marks to CBSE online platform; ensure accuracy before submission (no corrections permitted); maintain comprehensive evidence records; advise students on supplementary exam option (July 2026).

Class 10 note

Class 10 is a gateway qualification for Class 11 stream selection. Schools should ensure marks submitted accurately reflect student's capability. CBSE has published its Class 10 assessment formula: students are evaluated on exams already completed, with the average of best-performing subjects applied to remaining papers (e.g. four exams done, average of best three used for the rest).

Further guidance

cbse.gov.in – official CBSE circulars only sent to schools

¹ Class 12 mark upload window: 8–17 April 2026. Class 10 Phase 2 examinations are scheduled for 15 May – 1 June 2026 but may be subject to change. CBSE communicates almost exclusively through direct circulars to schools; public information is limited. Schools should check their official CBSE login for the latest guidance.

CISCE – ISC (Class 12) and ICSE (Class 10)

EXAMINATIONS CANCELLED – Results from internal school data

Assessment method

Examinations cancelled in the UAE. Grades determined from internal school performance, previous tests and project work. Final results declared by CISCE Council. Improvement Examination confirmed as available for students dissatisfied with results. Results expected to be declared alongside India results.

Key deadlines

Submission deadline to be confirmed by CISCE – schools should monitor for circular.

What schools must do

Submit internal performance data, test scores and project records; advise students and families regarding Improvement Examination option.

ICSE note

ICSE results determine eligibility for ISC subject choices.

Schools should ensure marks reflect genuine capability.

Further guidance

cisce.org

BTEC (Pearson UK Vocational Qualifications)

NOT CANCELLED – Programmes continuing with operational flexibility

Position

Pearson's examination cancellation covers International GCSE, International A Level and iPLS only.

BTEC qualifications are explicitly not included in the cancellation and programmes are continuing.

Pearson has published dedicated vocational qualifications guidance for affected centres.

BTEC programmes are continuing with operational flexibility:

- Standards Verification visits may move online where in-person visits are unsafe or impractical.
- Centres that have temporarily moved to online delivery do not require formal approval from Pearson.
- Pearson Set Assignments (PSAs) can be rescheduled as needed and may be administered online provided the centre is confident of the authenticity of learner responses.
- Physical certificate delivery may face delays, though Pearson can provide proof-of-qualification documentation directly to universities or other institutions to support learner progression.

What schools must do

Continue BTEC programmes as normal; ensure all internally assessed unit work is completed and submitted; be aware that Standards Verification visits may move online -centres will be contacted directly by email.

Where learner work is stored on-site and is inaccessible, contact Pearson support regarding certification urgency; contact the Pearson Regional Development Manager with any operational queries.

Further guidance

[qualifications.pearson.com/en/campaigns/support-for-centres-affected-by-the-conflict-in-the-middle-east.html](https://www.pearson.com/en/campaigns/support-for-centres-affected-by-the-conflict-in-the-middle-east.html)

AP and SAT (College Board) – US Curriculum

NO CANCELLATION ANNOUNCED – AP and SAT exams proceeding as scheduled

Position

The College Board has confirmed that AP and SAT examinations will proceed as scheduled in the UAE. KHDA Circular (issued to US-curriculum schools and approved test centres) outlines the readiness, safety and communication arrangements for these examination sittings, including pause-and-resume procedures in the event of an alert during an examination.

AP exams are scheduled to take place from 4–15 May 2026, with the late-testing window scheduled for 18–22 May 2026. The next UAE international SAT administration is scheduled for 6 June 2026, with the final international window sitting on 15 August 2026. Operational details and live regional updates are available on the College Board Middle East microsite for schools and test centres. A separate circular regarding the protocols for conducting these live examinations is to be circulated to U.S. curriculum schools

Key dates:

30 April	AP Seminar, AP Research and AP Computer Science Principles portfolio/performance task submissions due
8 May	AP Art and Design portfolio submissions due
4–15 May	AP exam sessions (Week 1: 4–8 May; Week 2: 11–15 May)
18–22 May	AP late-testing window
6 June	SAT UAE international administration

What schools must do

Follow the full arrangements set out in KHDA Circular 2026 for US-curriculum schools, covering readiness, safety protocols, communication during an incident, and the required actions for schools and test centres.

Ensure portfolio and performance task deadlines are met (30 April and 8 May, respectively).

Direct candidates and families to the College Board Middle East microsite for the live schedule and logistical updates, and brief staff, candidates and families on the contingency and safety procedures before each examination date.

If an alert is issued during an examination, apply the pause-and-resume procedure set out in the circular alongside the relevant College Board disruption protocol – Administration Incidents for AP and Disturbances and Interruptions for SAT – and notify KHDA immediately.

Further guidance

[College Board Middle East microsite](#) (live schedule and logistical updates) – APs and SATs
[KHDA Reopening Protocols for Private Schools in Dubai](#)
KHDA Protocols on Administration of AP and SAT Examinations (issued separately)

FBISE – Pakistani Curriculum (SSC and HSSC)

EXAMINATIONS POSTPONED – Decision under review

Position

The Federal Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (FBISE) has *postponed* SSC examinations in Iran, Kuwait, UAE and Bahrain due to the regional security situation.

The decision is being reviewed every 15 days based on the evolving situation. HSSC (Intermediate) examinations are reported to be proceeding as planned for May/June 2026; schools should confirm directly with FBISE.

FBISE has indicated that students may have the option of sitting examinations in Pakistan or in neighbouring countries where examinations are proceeding, subject to logistical feasibility.

Key dates

Original SSC I and SSC II examinations were scheduled from 31 March 2026. New dates to be confirmed following the review period.

What schools must do

- Monitor FBISE communications for updated examination dates
- Continue preparing students for examinations in the interim
- Advise students and families on the options available, including the possibility of sitting examinations in Pakistan
- Contact FBISE directly for the latest position on HSSC (Intermediate) examinations

Further guidance

fbise.edu.pk – official FBISE notifications

UK Domestic (Ofqual Regulated) Examinations

A number of Dubai private schools enter students for UK domestic (Ofqual-regulated) GCSE and A Level qualifications alongside or instead of international equivalents.

These are “home” qualifications regulated by Ofqual and are distinct from the international qualifications offered by the same awarding bodies.

Subjects commonly entered include Art and Design, Business Studies, Media Studies, Psychology, Sociology and certain modern foreign languages.

This section covers all five Ofqual-regulated awarding bodies.

Ofqual (Regulator) Position

Ofqual, the qualifications regulator for England, has not, at the time of writing, issued a single public statement online. However, in its 14 April 2026 letter to centres (covered in the Pearson section below), Pearson reports two specific Ofqual confirmations on which it is acting.

Schools should treat the points below as the working position for Pearson Edexcel UK-domestic qualifications, and where appropriate, should expect each of the other four Ofqual-regulated bodies (AQA, OCR, WJEC/Eduqas and CCEA) to communicate its own, likely similar or identical operational arrangements separately.

Ofqual has confirmed that *special consideration* is the primary route by which students should secure grades, since it allows a grade to be awarded where there is at least one component of evidence available. Awarding organisations may adapt some assessment arrangements – for example, remote delivery of language speaking assessments – and completed Non-Examined Assessment (NEA) may be used in line with normal JCQ procedures, with the existing two-week NEA extension still applying.

Pearson reports that, per Ofqual, awarding organisations cannot accept alternative forms of evidence, such as teacher judgment or mock examinations, for Ofqual-regulated qualifications, because these qualifications must be based on reliable evidence to secure their comparability with qualifications taken in England and around the world.

This position is a sharp distinction from the portfolio-of-evidence routes that apply to most of the international qualifications covered elsewhere in this guide.

Schools with Pearson Edexcel UK-domestic entries should treat this as the working position; although likely to be the same or similar, schools with AQA (UK Domestic), OCR, WJEC/Eduqas or CCEA entries should not simply assume the same rule applies until those bodies confirm their own positions.

Ofqual guidance:

gov.uk/government/organisations/Ofqual

AQA (UK Domestic) – GCSE and A Level

AWAITING FORMAL ANNOUNCEMENT – Ofqual decision pending

Position

AQA (UK domestic) is a separate awarding body from Oxford AQA International.

No formal public announcement has been made as of 13 April 2026 regarding AQA domestic GCSE and A Level examinations for centres in the Middle East.

However, in an FAQ on the OxfordAQA (international) website – link above – they advise

“For schools sitting AQA exams (Ofqual regulated UK domestic specifications),

AQA will be in touch separately with the guidance you need to follow.

Please contact AQA at eos@aqa.org.uk if you have any questions on this.”

What schools must do

- Identify all students entered through AQA domestic (not Oxford AQA International) qualifications
- Continue preparing students in the interim
- Begin collating evidence as a precaution, following the general principles in this Guide
- Monitor aqa.org.uk/news for announcements
- Make direct contact with AQA (UK Domestic)

Further guidance

aqa.org.uk

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA) – GCSE and A Level

AWAITING ANNOUNCEMENT – No Middle East-specific guidance issued

Position

OCR has not made any public announcement specific to the Middle East as of 13 April 2026.

OCR's published contingency planning applies only to UK-based disruptions (a contingency day of 24 June 2026 has been designated for the UK).

Schools entering candidates for OCR qualifications from Dubai should be aware that any decision on Middle East arrangements may follow the Ofqual position described above.

What schools must do

- Identify all students entered through OCR qualifications
- Continue preparation and begin evidence collection as a precaution
- Monitor ocr.org.uk for announcements

Further guidance

ocr.org.uk

Pearson (UK Domestic) – GCSE and A Level

PEARSON OPERATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS CONFIRMED (14 April 2026) – Action required by 21 April 2026

Position

Pearson's cancellation of the May/June 2026 examinations covers International GCSE, International A Level and iPLS only.

On **14 April 2026**, Pearson issued a letter to centres confirming the operational arrangements for its Ofqual-regulated GCSE and A Level qualifications affected by examination cancellation. Pearson has divided the affected qualifications into two groups, each with a different route to certification.

Group A covers regulated qualifications that include a Non-Examined Assessment (NEA) or a speaking component. The published Group A list includes GCSE Arabic, Art & Design, Chinese, Design & Technology, Drama, French, German, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Music, Persian, Physical Education, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Turkish and Urdu; and A level Art & Design, Chinese, Design & Technology, Drama & Theatre, English Language, English Language & Literature, English Literature, French, German, History, Italian, Music, Physical Education, Russian and Spanish.

For these, the completed NEA can be used to calculate the overall grade in line with normal JCQ procedures; language-speaking assessments may be conducted remotely, and the existing two-week NEA extension continues to apply. The qualification awarded remains the original Ofqual-regulated qualification.

Group B is described by Pearson as an “exceptional measure” and applies to regulated qualifications without NEA or a speaking component. The published Group B list includes GCSE Biology, Business, Chemistry, Combined Science, Computer Science, English Language, English Literature, Geography A, History, Mathematics, Physics, Psychology and Statistics; A level Arabic, Biology B, Biology (Salters Nuffield), Business, Chemistry, Economics A and B,

Further Mathematics, Geography, Mathematics, Physics, Politics and Psychology; and AS level English Literature, Further Mathematics, History, Mathematics, Politics and Psychology.

For these, students with a summer 2026 entry are offered an alternative route to certification operated by Pearson; the alternative route does not certify the original Ofqual-regulated qualification, and full operational detail (including the form of evidence, the certification awarded and any implications for university progression) is set out in Pearson's 14 April 2026 letter and accompanying **International Contingency Grading: Portfolio Submission** guidance. Schools should read both documents carefully before advising students.

A **21 April 2026** deadline applies to the **Group B** route. Schools must discuss the available options with each Group B student individually and either confirm the student's participation in the Pearson alternative route or withdraw the entry by 21 April 2026 to receive a refund of standard entry fees. A withdrawn student will not receive a Summer 2026 grade and will need to enter for their chosen qualification in a future series – for most regulated qualifications this will be the next available summer series, with a November 2026 series available for GCSE Mathematics and GCSE English Language only.

This Pearson letter applies only to Pearson Edexcel UK-domestic qualifications. The other Ofqual-regulated awarding bodies (AQA, OCR, WJEC/Eduqas, CCEA) have not at the time of writing issued comparable communications, and schools with entries through those bodies should not assume that the Group A / Group B framework above applies to them. Schools should continue to monitor each board's communications individually.

What schools must do

- Distinguish clearly between International and UK domestic Pearson entries
- Identify each entry as Group A (NEA or speaking component) or Group B (no NEA or speaking)
- For Group A entries, complete and submit NEA in line with normal JCQ procedures (two-week extension applies); arrange remote speaking assessments where required by the specification

- For Group B entries, meet with each student before 21 April 2026 to confirm whether they will participate in Pearson's alternative route or withdraw the entry; ensure each student understands the implications for the certification they will receive and for any university offers they hold before deciding
- Read the Pearson 14 April 2026 letter and the International Contingency Grading: Portfolio Submission guidance in full before advising any student; contact the Pearson Regional Development Manager and the Pearson support portal with any centre-specific queries

Further guidance

qualifications.pearson.com/en/campaigns/support-for-centres-affected-by-the-conflict-in-the-middle-east.html

Other Curriculum Pathways Operating in Dubai

Dubai's private school sector includes a number of curriculum pathways beyond those with confirmed examination cancellations.

This section provides the current position for every remaining curriculum operating in Dubai, including those with no external summer public examinations.

No school should be left uncertain about whether their curriculum is affected.

UAE Ministry of Education Curriculum

NO EXTERNAL PUBLIC EXAMINATIONS – Internal Assessment Based

Position

Schools following the UAE Ministry of Education curriculum use internal, Ministry-mandated assessment frameworks. There are no external public examinations equivalent to those offered by international boards. Assessment is administered within the school under Ministry guidance.

What schools must do

Continue following the Ministry of Education's assessment calendar and guidance. Contact the Ministry directly with any queries regarding Term 3 assessments.

Further guidance

moe.gov.ae

French Baccaauréat (AEFE)

EXAMINATIONS PROCEEDING – June 2026 session as scheduled

As of 9 April, the French Baccaauréat, administered through the Agence pour l'Enseignement Français à l'Étranger (AEFE) and the French Ministry of Education, appears to be proceeding as scheduled for June 2026.

The UAE is still listed among participating countries in the 2026 examination calendar.

Key dates

Philosophy: 15 June 2026. Specialty written tests: 16–18 June 2026. Grand oral: 22 June – 1 July 2026.

What schools must do

Continue preparing students as normal. Monitor AEFE communications for any changes.
Prepare portfolios of assessment as a precaution
Make direct contact with the Board.

Further guidance

aeфе.fr | education.gouv.fr

German Curriculum – Deutsches Internationales Abitur (DIA)

NO EXTERNAL PUBLIC EXAMINATIONS – Internal Assessment Based

Position

As of April 9th, the Deutsches Internationales Abitur (DIA), administered under the oversight of the Kultusministerkonferenz (KMK) and the Zentralstelle für das Auslandsschulwesen (ZfA), is proceeding as normal.

No disruption has been announced for the UAE.

What schools must do

Continue preparing students as normal.

Contact the school directly for the specific 2026 examination schedule.

Prepare portfolios of assessment as a precaution in case you are asked to submit these in lieu of the examinations

Further guidance

Contact the German curriculum school directly for 2026 examination arrangements.

Philippine Curriculum (DepEd)

EXAMINATIONS PROCEEDING – June 2026 session as scheduled

Position

Schools following the Philippine Department of Education (DepEd) K–12 curriculum do not have external public examinations in High School.

All assessment is school-based and follows the DepEd quarterly assessment framework.

What schools must do

Continue internal assessment processes as normal for the fourth quarter of SY 2025–2026.

Further guidance

deped.gov.ph

Russian Curriculum

LIMITED PUBLIC INFORMATION AVAILABLE – School should contact the Board directly

Position

Russian curriculum schools may enter students for the Unified State Exam (EGE) and the Basic State Exam (OGE), which are the Russian Federation's standardised graduation and university entrance examinations.

However, publicly available information in English about whether and how these examinations are administered for Russian curriculum schools in Dubai is extremely limited.

Significant reform of the EGE is scheduled for 2026, with examination content being restructured to reflect the federal school curriculum directly.

What schools must do

Russian curriculum schools should contact their examination administration body directly for the latest guidance on 2026 examination arrangements in the UAE.

N.B

Some other curricula are only implemented in newer schools where students have not yet reached an age at which public examinations are conducted.

Regularly Updated Guidelines

This Guide is a living document.

It will be published on the KHDA website and updated regularly as the examination contingency landscape evolves, as further board announcements are made and as KHDA's engagement with schools deepens.

The version number, date and any material changes will be recorded at the foot of each update. Schools should always ensure they are referring to the latest version.

The Examination Board Reference section is reviewed and updated regularly as further guidance is made public.

The wellbeing and students of determination guidance will evolve as we learn more about what schools and families need.

Please contact rpc@khda.gov.ae with any queries or for support