

What to do with our O and A Levels

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Covid-19 is one of the biggest crises faced by modern civilisation. It has affected multiple things including travel, social relations and most of all, the world economy. The governments of the United Kingdom and Bangladesh decided to close their schools until the situation improves.

Examination boards like Cambridge and Edexcel have made the decision to cancel O Level, IGCSEs, GCEs and A Level exams and give predicted grades for the session of May 2020. Many teachers and students have expressed their displeasure at this.

Zuhayr Rahman, student at South Breeze School, says, "It is quite disheartening that we won't be able to sit for our exams after so many months of hard work and I don't think the approach exam boards have taken with predicted grades will be able to provide a fair assessment for each and every student." Some students, however, are happy with the decision of predicted grades. Dipro Nishanto from Sunnydale School says, "This is something very good for me because in the booklet they said that the expected grades will be based upon the AS results and also it's a reflection on what you did on O Levels. Following that and as my grades in AS are good, I'm happy with what I'm going forward with."

According to some, predicted grades are unfair, and it won't show the actual potential of the student. A teacher from an English medium school in Dhanmondi, who

requested anonymity, states, "The system is completely flawed. Edexcel has asked teachers to give a predicted grade. Every teacher will be giving the best grade they can and assuming the teachers do it fairly, it will still be unfair for the students who are appearing as the grades will be standardised by the school's previous performance." This means the grades will be based on the past performance of the school and outstanding batches from a school that previously may have did not perform that well, cannot live up to their potential, leading to thousands of students getting grades that they don't deserve, be that better or worse. All these factors will lead to an inaccurate assessment of the student, which will later lead to a huge impact on their future.

The question still remains — was there a better option? To be fair, there may not have been. According to Quazi Rafquat Hossain, Edexcel Physics teacher at Think Tank, this is the best anyone could have hoped for. He comments, "It's not like they're forcing anyone. Students and candidates at their discretion can choose to take the center assessment grades or shift to the October session."

Another important factor is the detriment that all of this is causing to an individual student's preparations. "Studying now, right before exams, is most crucial. This is the time where you solve question papers and get more familiar with the type of questions and pattern you'll see when you sit for the exam," say Sarara Azmayeen,



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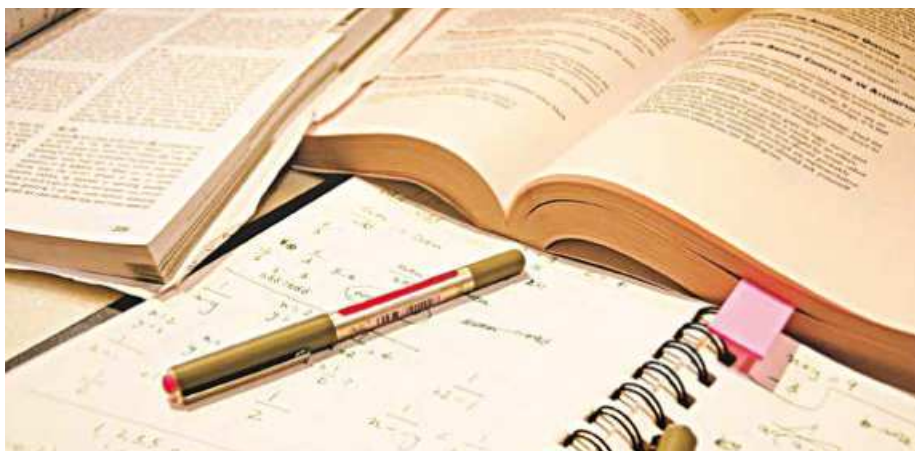
a student at Academica Institute, who was supposed to be sitting for her AS exams this year.

The October session is still in play, giving students a chance to shift their exams to later this year. It's not possible to predict whether Covid-19 will be gone by then, so it's still very uncertain if conditions will prove good enough for exams to be held. For Edexcel, only A Level exams are held in October; IGCSEs have never been held at that time in the past. It may be a possibility that they take IGCSEs in October, but that would have its own difficulties. To prepare for an IGCSE in October, Edexcel needs to do a lot of background logistics, many of which will prove difficult given the short amount of time remaining. I would stick to the predicted grades rather than wait around for relevant boards to cancel the exams again.

The question students still have on their mind — what is the best option going forward? According to Cambridge Physics teacher Mohammad Faisal, "IGCSE students should start studying for their AS while AS students should start studying for their A2 to opt for the best results they can get. A2 students should keep an eye out for what their universities are saying and in this break fill out on anything they have missed."

These are confusing times and for now nothing is certain. The best way to move forward would be to look at all the information available, and to make a decision catered to each individual's goals and practical realities.

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