



Covid-19 exemptions for March and June 2021

9 December 2020

This factsheet gives you information about the Covid-19 exemptions that are available for the March 2021 and June 2021 series. You need to apply before the series to use Covid-19 exemptions if you are not able to prepare candidates for certain components because of disruption caused by Covid-19.

We have listened as centres around the world told us about the challenges they are facing in preparing their candidates for the coming exam series. We are introducing a Covid-19 exemption for certain components being taken in March 2021 and June 2021 to give you more certainty about the flexibility we can allow.

Wherever possible, candidates should complete all components according to the requirements set out in the syllabus because this gives them the best chance of showing what they know and can do. We published guidance for **March 2021** and for **June 2021** to help you prepare for and manage certain components.

For some components available in June 2021 there may also be specific adjustments to the requirements of the component. We published these component adjustments in September and they are listed on our website. Where these adjustments are available, you need to apply for permission to use them before the exam or before submitting work.

However, we appreciate that, for some centres, the guidance and the adjustments to components may not go far enough. These centres may benefit from the new Covid-19 exemption.

How it works

Covid-19 disruption may have meant that you are not able to prepare candidates for certain components. If this is the case, you will be able to apply for your candidates to be exempt from taking components that are eligible for Covid-19 exemptions before the series begins.

If the application is accepted and your candidates complete all the other components in the syllabus option, we will calculate an assessed mark for the exempted component(s) and issue a syllabus grade.

How we have decided which components are eligible for a Covid-19 exemption

The full list of eligible components will be published on our website alongside our syllabus adaptations for the relevant exam series.

The components that are eligible for a Covid-19 exemption will meet either or both of the following criteria:

- The teaching and/or assessment of the component requires access to facilities and equipment that has not been possible due to Covid-19 disruption, e.g. instruments, laboratories, studios, audiovisual equipment, sports facilities, specific software, specialist materials.
- The teaching and/or assessment of the component requires ways of working with others, e.g. in pairs, groups or teams, which have not been possible due to Covid-19 disruption.

For some literature syllabuses, the following criteria will apply:

- The teaching and/or assessment of the component assesses distinct subject content (i.e. topics, set works or themes) from the rest of the option and it has not been possible to teach this content due to Covid-19 related disruption.

Your opportunity to review the provisional list of eligible components

All the components that are eligible for a Covid-19 exemption meet one of the two criteria. If you believe that a component your candidates are entering for also meets the criteria but we have not included it as an eligible component, please email info@cambridgeinternational.org by **Friday 8 January 2021** with the subject 'Covid-19 exemption – component query' and the details of the component.

We will review the component against our criteria again and confirm whether or not it will be eligible for a Covid-19 exemption.



How Covid-19 exemptions relate to the special consideration processes

Our standard special consideration processes are still available for the components candidates are taking to make allowances for some adverse circumstances, for example illness, bereavement or injury.

Here are the key differences between Covid-19 exemptions and special consideration:

Covid-19 exemptions	Special consideration
Can be applied for where it has not been possible to prepare candidates for a component because of Covid-19 disruption.	For candidates who have suffered some misfortune during or immediately before an exam which prevented them from fully showing what they know and can do.
Can be applied for and given in advance.	Does not help to compensate for a loss of teaching time. Can only be applied for and given after the assessment has taken place.

How to apply for a Covid-19 exemption

We will share the application form and more detailed instructions in January. You need to know which entry option your candidates will be entered for, and which components they plan to take. We will also ask you (approximately) how many candidates the exemption will be used for to help us in planning the exam series. We will review your application and let you know if the exemption has been approved.

We will accept applications for Covid-19 exemptions for March 2021 from **6 January** until **17 January**. Applications for Covid-19 exemptions for June 2021 will open mid-January and close on **17 April**. After you have made final entries, we will ask you for the details of which candidates will be using the exemption.

Things to consider before applying for a Covid-19 exemption

You must have fully explored the ways in which you could prepare candidates for the full assessment and have found that it is not possible to do so, before you apply for a Covid-19 exemption.

Our assessments are designed to give candidates the best chance of showing what they know and can do in the subject area. When candidates complete the full assessment for a syllabus, it includes the greatest range of question types and tasks, which cover the different topic areas and assessment objectives. When a candidate is exempt from part of the assessment, it puts more pressure on the smaller range of questions that the candidate will answer. It removes an opportunity for candidates to show what they

know and can do, and their grade will be entirely based on their performance in a more limited range of components. The risk of the candidate underperforming may be greater if they complete a smaller percentage of the assessment.

Being exempt from a component also means there is a greater risk that candidates who are absent for an acceptable reason from one of the other components (including, for example, illness, the need to self-isolate, or a 'lockdown' on the date of the exam) would not have sufficient evidence for us to calculate and award an assessed mark for the component they were absent for.

Applying for a Covid-19 exemption therefore means there is a greater risk that we might not be able to release a result for the candidates affected. The application form will ask you to confirm that you accept this risk and that you have made the candidates and/or their parents/guardians aware. You should therefore only apply for a Covid-19 exemption when:

- you have fully explored the ways in which you can prepare candidates for the full assessment and have found that it is not possible to do so.
- you cannot defer your entries to a future exam series.
- you have considered how the Covid-19 exemption will allow you to plan your teaching and preparation to complete the remainder of the course.
- you are prepared to accept the potential risks of a Covid-19 exemption and have made candidates and/or their parents/guardians aware of these.



Covid-19 exemptions and endorsed speaking components

For Cambridge IGCSE™ English as a Second Language 0510 and Cambridge IGCSE 9–1 English as a Second Language (Speaking endorsement) 0993, the speaking component is separately endorsed. You cannot apply for an exemption for the speaking component for these syllabuses because it is not possible to calculate an assessed mark for a separately endorsed component.

If it is not possible to complete the speaking test, we advise that you enter the candidate for Cambridge IGCSE English as a Second Language (Count-in) 0511, or Cambridge IGCSE 9–1 English as a Second Language (Count-in) 0991, as the speaking component counts towards the syllabus grade. It is not separately endorsed. You may then apply for an exemption for the speaking component.

Provided that your candidate completes 50 per cent or more of the syllabus in the series they are making an entry for, we will be able to calculate an assessed mark for the speaking component for this syllabus, which will contribute to the candidate's overall syllabus grade.

Questions and answers

Why do we have to apply – can't you just remove the same components for everyone?

We have given this option a lot of thought. However, we decided that this would not be the best way to help our global network of centres, which are all facing different situations. Centres are free to teach the content and skills in our syllabuses in whichever order they choose. Remove a particular component for all candidates would penalise those candidates in centres that had already prepared for it and are able to take the component.

Can specific candidates for a component be given Covid-19 exemption or does it need to apply to all candidates at our centre?

You will be able to specify which candidates are to be exempted from each component, if different individuals or groups of candidates have been affected differently by the disruption caused by Covid-19.

Why do you need to know the entry option for our candidates?

Candidates need to complete a sufficient proportion of the assessment for us to calculate a mark and a syllabus grade. This means that, to approve a Covid-19 exemption, we need to check which component has been applied for, the percentage of the assessment that it is worth, and which other components the candidates will be taking. Help and guidance for this will be available soon.

We think completing the component is possible but will be more difficult than normal – should we apply for a Covid-19 exemption?

If it is still possible to complete the course you should not apply for a Covid-19 exemption. Centres and candidates should prepare for and take as much of the assessment as they are able to. The full assessment for each syllabus will cover all the knowledge and skills that candidates should acquire in studying the subject. Therefore, taking all the components will give candidates a greater opportunity to show what they know and can do.

An exemption from a component also increases the risk that, if a candidate is absent from another component for example due to illness, we will not be able to calculate an assessed mark and we will not be able to release a result for the candidate. A Covid-19 exemption should be a 'last resort' if you cannot complete the teaching of the course in any other way.

Can private candidates apply for component exemptions?

Private candidates will be able to apply for component exemptions through their test centre. We will publish more information about how to do this in January.

Can we exempt our candidates from part of a component, such as a particular task or section?

No. These exemptions can only be used for entire components your centre is unable to prepare candidates for.

If we have had a Covid-19 exemption approved but then circumstances change and we can prepare candidates for the component, can we withdraw the exemption?

Yes, please email info@cambridgeinternational.org with the subject line 'March 2021 Covid-19 exemptions' or 'June 2021 Covid-19 exemptions' and an explanation of your request.

Learn more! For more information please visit www.cambridgeinternational.org/examsOfficers or contact Customer Services on +44 (0)1223 553554 or email info@cambridgeinternational.org