



## GCSE pupil: 'I'm worried my cohort will be stigmatised'

In the hours since their GCSEs were cancelled, Rosa Boyd and her Year 11 classmates have been left to speculate about what it means for their grades, their A levels and their future

By Rosa Boyd 19 March 2020 - 15:35



In the hour after [Boris Johnson announced that GCSEs were cancelled](#), I consoled a tearful friend over FaceTime, I voted on an Instagram poll about whether or not they would be postponed, and I was instructed to bring in Sharpies to school this Friday so we could sign our shirts.

It's been a rollercoaster. No two reactions have been the same. There is still [a lot of uncertainty regarding whether our exams will still happen](#), later than usual, or whether they will never happen.

What then? [Will we get our predicted grades](#)? Will we never get any grades? What about sixth-form admissions? Do we have to retake the year?

I wish I could definitively say I was elated or disappointed. But, truth be told, I can't tell what I'm feeling behind this hysteria.

### Gutted that our hard work won't be recognised

The bane of my existence for the past few years has been maths. I go to a highly academic school where everyone is fluent in a language I don't seem to be able to grasp, and it causes

me a lot of grief.

I knew that to get into sixth form, I needed a grade 6. I have worked extraordinarily hard to reach this. In fact, I had planned to see my tutor tomorrow, and he asked me to do a past paper for him. I was halfway through when I got the news. Do I need to finish it? Will I ever have to do maths again?

You'd think that over the past few weeks, the government would have come up with a contingency plan for this – but even the wording provided was unclear. Cancelled for May and June or cancelled for ever?

My year-group WhatsApp chat has been buzzing for hours – I've got 600 unread messages. We feel gutted that all our hard work may never be recognised. But I at least am relieved that my mock grades were good; I have friends who didn't revise at all as mocks "weren't the real thing".

We realise that this is a time of national crisis, but the uncertainty is paralysing, and certain to [take its toll on the mental health of our cohort](#).

### **Forever stigmatised**

That said, I have friends who are celebrating. If it's really true that we don't have to go to school from Friday until September, then we'll get an even longer "GCSE summer" than we expected (though we may need to rename it). On social media, I've seen revision timetables ripped up and books binned already.

Nobody is completely thrilled, though. Our prom, leavers' assembly, the works, are all up in the air. These milestones are important, and so is our chance to prove ourselves and our academic capabilities.

We have sacrificed lots of fun things over the past two years in order to focus on our GCSEs. Parties. Holidays. Concerts. And now to be told we don't even get to do ourselves proud?

I'm worried that our cohort will forever be stigmatised for this experience – mocked by older years saying we achieved our grades only because we didn't have to do GCSEs, or that we had it easier than they did.

I'm also far more intimidated by A levels than I was, because I'll never have had the experience of standardised exams until I tackle them. As someone who was looking to move schools for sixth form, I wonder how this will affect me, for my offers were all conditional, based on my exam results.

The announcements yesterday were shocking and have left us with a ridiculous number of questions. All I know is that this is unprecedented, and will have consequences far beyond what we can currently envisage.

*Rosa Boyd is a Year 11 pupil at The Henrietta Barnett School, in North London*



Rosa Boyd

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