

DOC CIMEA 133

# **TRANSITION FROM SCHOOL TO HIGHER EDUCATION IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 VIRUS AND GUIDELINES FOR RECOGNITION OF QUALIFICATIONS**



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**Annex - Impact of the COVID-19 virus on Higher Education and Recognition. Joint Communication from the President of the European Students’ Union (ESU) and the President of the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee Bureau (LRCCB)**

## Objectives of the document

1. To put into focus the impact of COVID-19 on qualifications for access to higher education.
2. To present the Italian situation regarding the holding of the final state exam of the upper secondary school cycle for the 2019/20 school year, and access to higher education in Italy in light of the impact of COVID-19.
3. To present changes related to final upper secondary school exams and qualifications for access to higher education caused by COVID-19 in 16 case studies.

## 1. Introduction

COVID-19 has had a strong impact on the higher education system. From the recognition point of view, this impact also involves qualifications for access to higher education. In the acute period of the crisis, many countries in Europe and around the world closed schools and stopped classroom activities, and this has led to changes regarding the final exams of upper secondary schools and the qualifications for access to higher education. National authorities have encouraged the adoption of online teaching and some countries have had to take measures to redefine the final exam of the upper secondary school. These are changes that will have long-term effects, given that these qualifications will also affect recognition procedures in the years to come.

In a nutshell, these changes can be summarised in four categories:

- Cancellation of the final exam (and eventual changes in the way the qualification is obtained);
- holding of the final exams and/or modification of the procedure to obtain the qualification, in countries where a final exam is not foreseen;
- postponement of exam;
- examination taken at the student's choice, only when interested in continuing his/her studies.

Being aware of and keeping track of these changes is necessary for two main reasons:

- to ensure the fair recognition of qualifications, in line with the Lisbon Convention: being aware of the measures that have been taken in each country, the changes relating to how to obtain the qualification and possibly the characteristics of the qualification itself, and the rights that qualification gives in the reference system, represent the essential starting point for evaluation procedures and to guarantee fair recognition of the qualification.
- to guarantee the right to education: the risk of the health crisis turning into a social, economic, and democracy crisis is a topic discussed in the public debate of many countries. If in the education sector this risk is mainly linked to the increase in inequality, the issue from the point of view of recognition is particularly felt in the context of the school-university transition. This is a delicate moment, where the changes taking place in the context of final upper secondary school qualifications, if not correctly analysed and evaluated, can lead to unjustly penalising some students compared to others.

Knowledge of the changes taking place is crucial to guarantee these principles not only with reference to 2020, but also in the years to come: the qualifications issued this year will also be able to request access to recognition procedures in the coming years, and it is necessary to have an accurate and updated archive of the changes provoked by the emergency linked to the spread of the virus.



## 2. Information sources

For information sources on school closings at European and global level, two references are the [Eurydice](#) site and the [UNESCO](#)<sup>1</sup> site respectively. An interactive map is available on the UNESCO site that allows you to monitor the closures of school and higher education institutions from 16<sup>th</sup> February, 2020 to today.

The [ENIC-NARIC](#) centres are monitoring changes taking place in the various countries, also with reference to qualifications for access to higher education, taking into account that the situation is still evolving in some cases. In the framework of the ENIC-NARIC network, mention should be made of the work to collect changes on qualifications for access to higher education coordinated by the Danish ENIC-NARIC centre, to which most of the centres collaborated. This work was published on [4<sup>th</sup> August, 2020](#) on the ENIC-NARIC website and constitutes a reference for the work of the ENIC-NARIC centres and for higher education institutions, offering information provided by the reference institution of each country.

Also on the ENIC-NARIC website, a new section has been recently created in the country profiles relating to access to higher education (“Access to Higher Education”). This section, like the entire country profile, is updated by the ENIC-NARIC centre of the reference country, and therefore constitutes a direct source of information.

Another reference is the [Q-ENTRY](#) site, which offers information on the qualifications that give access to higher education in 55 countries. The site offers information on the characteristics of the title, an example of the qualification and where the methods for verifying the authenticity of the title are also available. Again, the information was provided by the competent national authorities, in particular by the national information centers on the recognition of qualifications.

With respect to the guidelines to be adopted in this area, the joint letter of the President of the European Student Union (ESU) and of the President of the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee Bureau, attached to this document, should be noted. National authorities, ENIC-NARIC centres and higher education institutions are invited to “adopt recognition procedures that are as flexible as possible in light of this exceptional situation, in accordance with and in the spirit of the Lisbon Convention, the only international legal instrument which once again shows itself as flexible and adaptable to any context, to ensure fair recognition procedures capable of ensuring the same academic rights for access to higher education courses in the various systems, based on the criteria of reciprocity, trust and solidarity between countries and institutions”<sup>2</sup>.

## 3. The Italian situation

In Italy, schools have been officially closed and all lessons have been conducted online since March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2020 ([DPCM March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2020](#)). Instruction, however, has continued, and even if the buildings and structures have remained closed to classroom activities, teaching and learning activities have continued online.

<sup>1</sup> DOC CIMEA 130, April, 2020. For more information on information resources for higher education institutions see: Lantero L., et al., [Effects of COVID-19 on Higher Education and Recognition of qualifications. Information note for higher education institutions](#), DOC CIMEA 130, April, 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Lantero L., Napier R., [Impact of COVID-19 on Higher Education and Recognition: Joint Communication by President of the European Students’ Union \(ESU\) and President of the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee \(LRCC\) Bureau](#), 7<sup>th</sup> July, 2020.

Regarding the end of the school year, and the holding of the final state exam of the upper secondary school cycle, more commonly known as "*Maturità*", the Ministry of Education at the beginning of April, 2020 defined 2 possible scenarios, regulated by the [Law Decree 8th April, 2020 n. 22](#) regulating the holding of the exam both in the event that it was possible to resume teaching activities by 18th May, 2020, and in the event that this was not possible<sup>3</sup>.

On April 18th, the advisory regulating the [composition of the commissions](#) for the final state exam of the upper secondary school cycle was published by the Ministry of Education. The main reference point is the "[Regulation on state exams in the second cycle of upper school education for the 2019/2020 school year](#)", published by the Ministry of Education on 16th May, 2020. The main points of the regulation are summarised below:

1/ The starting date of the final state exam session of the upper secondary school cycle is **17th June, 2020**, therefore the date originally established at the beginning of the 2019/20 school year is maintained (art. 2).

2/ The duration of the examination, carried out orally, is approximately 1 hour (art. 17, paragraph 3).

3/ The Exam Commission is composed of 7 members: 6 commissioners belonging to the educational institution, designated by the competent class councils, and an external president (art. 11 paragraphs 1 and 2). Each commission can evaluate up to a maximum of 5 candidates per day, and the oral interview schedule is established by each exam commission, proceeding in alphabetical order starting from the letter drawn by lot (art. 14 paragraph 3).

4/ At the end of the state exam, each candidate is assigned an overall final score in percentage points, calculated as follows (art. 23):

a) up to a maximum of 60 points for the school credit of each candidate, with reference to the last three years of the course: up to 18 points for the third year, up to 20 for the fourth year, and up to 22 for the final year (art. 10);

b) up to 40 points for the oral exam;

c) up to a maximum of 5 points that can be assigned by the exam commission to deserving candidates to reach the maximum score of 100 (art. 23, paragraph 3).

In addition, the exam commission can also award honours to students who meet certain requirements (art. 23, paragraph 3).

The minimum score to pass the exam is 60 (art. 23, paragraph 3).

The regulation provides information on the content and the application of the oral test (art. 17).

From a recognition point of view, the final qualification awarded "*Diploma di superamento dell'esame di Stato conclusivo dei corsi di Istruzione Secondaria Superiore*" does not show any change compared to the past, both in terms of the legal value of the qualification and for the timing of its attainment.

On the website of the Ministry of Education, the reference point is the [page dedicated to state exams](#) with all the information and reference documents.

As regards access to higher education, a reference document is the [Law of 6th June, 2020, n. 41](#), which converted into law the decree of 8th April, 2020, n. 22. Among the changes made during the conversion into law, the following text is inserted in article 1, paragraph 7: "If the exams referred to in this paragraph do not end in reasonable time, limited to the academic year 2020/2021, the subjects

<sup>3</sup>For more information cf. Lantero L., et al., [Effects of COVID-19 on Higher Education and Recognition of qualifications. Information note for higher education institutions](#), cit.

referred to in this paragraph can **participate in the admission tests** to graduate courses with restricted entry as well as in other tests provided by universities, institutions of advanced artistic, musical and dance training (AFAM) and by other post-scholastic higher education institutions, **subject to passing the final state exam of the second upper secondary school cycle of education. The provisions referred to in the third paragraph also apply to candidates from a foreign education system who have not obtained an appropriate qualification for higher education in time for participation in the relative admission tests, where applicable.**” The additional text, relating to external candidates, inserts a principle relevant for the purposes of recognition, which although already applied according to the principles of the Lisbon Convention, for the first time is included in a legislative text in such a clear way. **In other words, students who have not obtained the qualification for access to higher education, whether Italian or foreign, recognised as suitable, in reasonable time, can still participate in the admission tests to graduate courses with restricted entry and other tests required by the institutions higher education, conditional on obtaining the final qualification.**

The other reference document for access to higher education in Italy is the “[Procedures for entry, stay and enrolment of students applying for visas, relating to higher education courses in Italy, at higher education institutions valid for the academic year 2020-2021](#)”, which provides guidelines to higher education institutions for the admission of international students to courses in Italy. From a recognition point of view, in fact, the document published by the Ministry for Universities and Research, in its “Introduction to the academic year 2020/21”, provides a guiding criterion: “Regarding the evaluation of foreign school qualifications suitable for access to first cycle courses in Italy (high school diplomas), it is recalled that, due to the COVID-19 emergency, many foreign countries have adopted exceptional measures in order to guarantee the completion of school cycles and the release of the related final qualifications. **The Italian higher education institutions are therefore invited to apply the criteria established by the Lisbon Convention for the aforementioned cases, or the recognition of the same academic rights that a given final school qualification officially confers in the foreign reference system, unless proven substantial differences exist**, also with reference to the duration of the overall pre-university schooling required in Italy, which should be remembered is twelve years”.

This guiding criterion, in line with the principles of the Lisbon Convention, is also reaffirmed in [Annex 1](#) of the “Procedures”, dedicated precisely to final upper secondary school qualifications and to the qualifications that generally give access to higher education in Italy. The text added to art. 1, paragraph 7 of the Law of 6<sup>th</sup> June, 2020, n. 41 “Conversion into law, with amendments, of the decree of 8<sup>th</sup> April 2020, n. 22, containing urgent measures on the regular conclusion and orderly start of the school year and on the conduct of state exams”, described above, is also mentioned.

In essence, therefore, the common indication for higher education institutions, affirmed both in Law 6 June, 2020 n. 41 and in the “Procedures”, is to adopt all possible measures to ensure fair recognition of the qualification for access to higher education, without the changes induced by the spread of COVID-19 unjustly penalising candidates.

Lastly, it should be noted that, in light of the impact of COVID-19 as well and with the intent of facilitating procedures for international students, also from the point of view of recognition, a new



portal [Universitaly](#)<sup>4</sup> was launched, which is now the single access point for pre-enrolment applications of international students in digital mode. The initiative was led by the Ministry for Universities and Research, with the support of CRUI - Conference of Rectors of Italian Universities and CIMEA - Information Center on Mobility and Academic Equivalences and in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and of International Cooperation and with the Ministry of the Interior. The Universitaly initiative is part of the broader national strategy in response to COVID-19, outlined by the Ministry for Universities and Research in the annex to the note of May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2020 prot. 798, in which the guidelines for the system of higher education and research after the emergency phase are outlined.”<sup>5</sup>.

#### 4. Case studies

The consequences that the epidemic caused by the COVID-19 virus is still having in the field of higher education at an international level are manifold and diverse and vary according to the country concerned, the level of education examined (secondary or post-secondary) and of the characteristics of each system as well as of the geographical composition of a single State. These aspects have had a more or less significant impact on the effect, duration and extent of the measures undertaken in an attempt to reconcile the protection of public health, on the one hand, and the need to guarantee the completion of study cycles and the inalienable right to education.

No wonder, therefore, if a significant part of our analysis is focused on the observation, description and continuous monitoring of the measures taken by each country in the world in order to guarantee the regular completion of secondary education cycles and the consequent award of a final qualification eligible for access to higher education.

The solutions adopted, as stated above, vary significantly depending on the structure of each individual system: there are countries in which the final qualification is issued following the regular completion of the study cycle; others in which an “in-house” final test is scheduled, that is, administered by the educational institution in question; still others where the final test is established at national level and administered by external institutions (“Boards”). In these latter cases, obtaining the final qualification is therefore conditional and subordinate to the successful completion of the final exam.

Finally, there are countries that provide for a specific national admission test to higher education, therefore mandatory for those who intend to continue their university studies.

The complexity increases exponentially for qualifications defined as “international”, those qualifications that do not belong to any particular national system - this is the case of the **International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme** - or which, while referring to a specific system, go beyond national borders to be effectively administered and awarded in various countries around the world.

<sup>4</sup> The presentation webinar of the new Universitaly portal is available online at the following link:  
<https://www.cruis.it/archivio-notizie/universitaly-webinar-di-presentazione.html>

<sup>5</sup> Lantero L., Napier R., *Impact of COVID-19 on Higher Education and Recognition: Joint Communication by President of the European Students' Union (ESU) and President of the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee (LRCC) Bureau*, 7<sup>th</sup> July, 2020.



This is the case of the **IGCSE** (International General Certificate of Secondary Education) and the **GCE (General Certificate of Education) International AS & A Level**, awarded outside the United Kingdom by institutions such as Cambridge Assessment International Education and Pearson Edexcel International.

This is also the case of the **Advanced Placements**, organised by the College Board, a private non-profit US institution, and also awarded as a consequence of courses held at accredited American schools operating outside the United States.

#### 4.1 China

China was the first country to be affected by Covid-19, and as a result, on 21<sup>st</sup> February there was the national closure of schools and higher education institutions. Since April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020 China has seen a gradual reopening of schools, starting from the levels of education where a final exam is foreseen to access the next cycle of studies.

On March 31<sup>st</sup>, the Chinese [Ministry of Education](#) announced that the GaoKao will be postponed to July, 2020, with the exception of the municipality of Beijing and the province of Hubei, which are most affected by the virus and have been given the opportunity to decide independently, subject to central government approval, the postponement of the exam. However, on April 12<sup>th</sup> and April 20<sup>th</sup> respectively, both Hubei Province and Beijing Municipality approved the government-set dates. The GaoKao exam took place regularly on **7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> July** and the government tried to put in place all the necessary measures to allow students to take the exam safely in the classroom. However, the situation is still unstable because, despite the fact that schools and universities are organising to ensure a gradual reopening, travel between different regions of the country is limited and some provinces still report levels of contagion. The use of online teaching is still expected for schools and universities in the coming months, and classroom attendance will only be for those who live in areas adjacent to the campuses.

#### 4.2 France

The written and oral exams scheduled for the award of the *Diplôme du Baccalauréat (général, technologique and professionnel)*, administered by the *Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale et de la Jeunesse*, have been cancelled. The marks will be awarded on the basis of the academic performance of the first 2 quarters or first semester, therefore the marks obtained during the lockdown period will not be taken into consideration. The usual scale from 0 to 20 will be used, where 10 represents the “pass mark”. The final results were announced by the French Ministry on 7 July:

<https://www.education.gouv.fr/le-baccalaureat-2020-session-de-juin-305103>

It is possible to verify the final results through the online platform created by the *Ministère de l'Éducation nationale et de la Jeunesse* and the *Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur, de la Recherche et de l'Innovation*: <https://diplome.gouv.fr/sanddiplome/login>

The *Diplôme du Baccalauréat* is expected to be awarded in September/October 2020.

For updates: <https://www.education.gouv.fr/bac-brevet-cap-bep-bts-2020-les-reponses-vos-questions-303348>



### 4.3 Germany

In Germany the institutions responsible for the final examination (*Abitur*) are the Ministries of the 16 *Länder* who have reached an agreement that establishes that the *Abitur* will take place regularly. *Abitur* exams in German schools located in the southern hemisphere will begin in late August - early September. Instead, schools in the northern hemisphere managed to take the written part of the *Abitur* exams, but not the oral part. The final upper secondary school qualifications thus obtained grant the same access rights to higher education in Germany, like those issued in previous years.

### 4.4 IB – International Baccalaureate

The exams scheduled for April 30<sup>th</sup> and May 22<sup>nd</sup> were cancelled.

The qualifications of the **IB Diploma Programme**, **Career-related Programme certificate** or **Course certificate** had been issued on the basis of the results obtained by the students during the year and the average that the individual schools communicated to the IB Organisation.

The general requirements for awarding the IB Diploma Programme remain unchanged:

- at least 24 points in six subjects of choice, 12 of which must be obtained at “Higher Level”;
- positive result in the three main subjects: Theory of Knowledge (TOK), Creativity, Action, Service (CAS) and Extended Essay (EE).

The final results were announced on 6<sup>th</sup> July 2020.

Since the beginning of the epidemic, the IB Organisation has guaranteed support and continuity for students in difficulty due to travel restrictions, providing for the possibility of transfer to another IB school or to continue in e-learning mode.

For further information and updates:

<https://www.ibo.org/covid-19-support/>

<https://www.ibo.org/news/news-about-the-ib/awarding-may-2020-results-further-information/>

### 4.5 India

The two main institutions responsible for the final exams of the last year of upper secondary school are: the [Central Board of Secondary Education \(CBSE\)](#) and the [Council for Indian School Certificate Examinations \(CISCE\)](#). The first, the most important, has more than 21,000 affiliated schools in India and more than 250 schools outside Indian territory; the second one has about 2,000 affiliated schools. The CBSE was expected to conduct the twelfth class final exams between 15<sup>th</sup> February and 30<sup>th</sup> March, 2020. Due to the rapid spread of the infection, the exams scheduled from 19<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> March were initially postponed to July, but due to the further aggravation of the pandemic in India, were definitively canceled:

<http://cbse.nic.in/newsite/attach/Notification%20dt.%2025.06.2020.pdf>

The final results were published by the CBSE on **13<sup>th</sup> July**, released on the basis of the evaluation scheme developed by the CBSE, reference to which on the following link:

<http://cbse.nic.in/newsite/attach/Notification%20dt.%2025.06.2020.pdf>

Likewise, the CISCE exams have also been canceled. The final results were published on **10<sup>th</sup> July** on the basis of an evaluation scheme developed by the same Board: <https://results.cisce.org/>



#### 4.6 Iran

The [Ministry of Education](#) announced the closure of schools from March 5<sup>th</sup>, encouraging the adoption of online teaching. This has increased the gap between rural and industrialised areas due to the difference in [network coverage](#) and the possibility of using the tools necessary to access online learning. For this reason, the government made available some programmes for students through national TV channels and subsequently developed an *ad hoc* platform for students.

Starting from May 16<sup>th</sup>, in order to allow all students to finish the scholastic path in a homogeneous way and take the final exams, [all schools reopened](#).

The new academic year (2020/21) will begin regularly on 6<sup>th</sup> September all over the country, as it was announced by the Ministry of Education, although it will be up to the students to decide whether to attend classes physically. The same measures will also be adopted at the level of higher education, with the reopening of all universities and the isolation only where outbreaks occur. The challenges that Iran will face in the upcoming months remain economical and technological, and therefore the possibility to guarantee for the majority of the population the access to tools and resources.

#### 4.7 Ireland

Written exams, initially scheduled for 29<sup>th</sup> July 2020, for the award of the Leaving Certificate, are currently postponed to a later date.

The Leaving Certificate is the final high school qualification that guarantees access to higher education in Ireland. This qualification is issued after a written and oral exam plus a series of practical tests in some subjects. The exams are usually administered by the State Examinations Commission. Following the decision to cancel the exams scheduled in July, students will obtain, in place of the Leaving Certificate, a [State Certificate of Calculated Grades](#) at the end of their schooling, based on their academic performance and the average mark obtained in the individual schools. The latter will have to estimate the percentage of marks that the students would have presumably obtained had they sat the Leaving Certificate Examinations (predicted grades). On the basis of this data they will create a ranking for each class which will be communicated to the Department of Education and Skills which will then proceed to further standardise the final marks.

The State Certificate of Calculated Grades will have the same value as the Leaving Certificate both for access to higher education and for access to the workplace.

For further information and updates:

- [Government of Ireland, Department of Education and Skills: Leaving Certificate 2020: Information and Resources](#)
- [Department of Education and Skills](#)
- [State Examinations Commission \(SEC\)](#)
- [Central Applications Office \(CAO\)](#)

#### 4.8 The Arab World

At first glance, the response of the Arabic-speaking countries to COVID-19 was homogeneous and saw the partial suspension of educational activities for fifteen days, starting from the beginning of March. However, when a global tendency to offer distance school and university teaching emerged, the first difference became apparent. Countries such as the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and Bahrain have managed to offer students platforms and tools to continue teaching; other states, especially in



North Africa, have started broadcasting primary and secondary school programmes through national television channels. Morocco and Jordan also made free web resources available that previously were limited in access and had to be paid for.

Until April, many countries had not yet commented on the dates and procedures for the final upper secondary school exam. An exception in this sense is represented by [Tunisia](#) which has declared that the final exam of upper secondary school, the *Baccalaureat*, will be sat by students approximately between July and September. The exam took place regularly in July and universities and schools plan to resume activities regularly in September. The same choice was then made by other North African countries, such as Morocco, Egypt and Libya.

As far as higher education is concerned, also in this case the responses were different. In many countries, teaching during the 2019/2020 academic year had already been suspended due to ongoing national demonstrations, such as in Iraq. Several universities in the Arab world have decided to postpone the mid-term exams until September, to be replaced by tests whose results will not contribute to the final GPA. In most countries, universities are now considering a reopening for those courses that require workshops, while the other lessons will continue online, despite the limited possibility for students to access such materials. For more information on the situation in the Arab world, we suggest continual monitoring of the websites of the national news agencies and those of the relevant ministries.

For more information, we recommend the [Al-Fanar Media](#) website.

#### 4.9 Pakistan

The institution responsible for managing the exams and the issuance of final upper secondary school diplomas is the [Federal Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education](#), which has announced that all the exams scheduled for to obtain the Higher Secondary Certificate have been canceled.

The final results were announced on 30<sup>th</sup> July 2020, based on the evaluation scheme developed by the Federal Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education:  
[https://www.fbise.edu.pk/notifications/ssc/special\\_policy.pdf](https://www.fbise.edu.pk/notifications/ssc/special_policy.pdf)

Lastly, the HEC - Higher Education Commission, has published series of guidelines to support schools and universities in the evaluation and continuous evaluation of student performance during the lockdown period:

<https://www.hec.gov.pk/english/Pages/Covid-19-Guidance.aspx>

#### 4.10 Portugal

The pandemic caused by the COVID-19 virus and the related measures of flexibility and health safety have led Portugal to adopt some important changes on the principle itself of the national exam scheduled for the end of upper secondary school studies (*Exames Nacionais do Ensino Secundário*). Until now, this examination has performed two main functions: to conclude the secondary school cycle with the award of the final qualification (*Diploma do Ensino Secundário*), and to allow access to higher education. Following the recent measures adopted, the final exam scheduled for July 2020 - currently confirmed - will have to be taken only by those who intend to continue their university studies.



These will be examined only on the subjects they have selected in view of the chosen university course. On the contrary, students who do not intend to continue their studies will directly obtain the final diploma without having to take the national test and the marks will be calculated only on the average established internally by the school.

For further information and updates:

***Direção-Geral do Ensino Superior:***

- <https://www.dges.gov.pt/pt>
- <https://www.dges.gov.pt/pt/pagina/guia-geral-de-exames-2020>

#### 4.11 United Kingdom

In the UK all the exams scheduled for the award of the final qualifications of lower and upper secondary school, in particular **GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education)**, **O Levels**, **GCE (General Certificate of education) AS & A level**, and the Scottish qualifications Higher, Advanced Highers, National 4 and 5 have been cancelled.

The final marks will be assigned on the basis of the academic performance and the assessments made by the individual schools. Updated guidelines and information are published at the following link:

- [Ofqual: The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation](#)

This decision is due to the fact that the final qualifications are normally issued following examinations administered by regional institutions external to the school (external Boards), in particular by:

- AQA
- Pearson
- OCR
- WJEC (Wales)
- CEA (Northern Ireland)

The same measures have been applied for qualifications issued internationally, outside the United Kingdom, by **Cambridge Assessment International Education**, **Pearson** and **OxfordAQA**. All exams scheduled for the award of **IGCSE**, **International AS / A level**, **Pre-U Diploma** initially scheduled in May and June have been cancelled.

In this case as well, an ad hoc methodology has been adopted for the award of the final marks which will no longer take into account the results of the external assessment carried out by the institutions mentioned above, but the average of the marks of the students calculated by the schools. This data will then be communicated by the individual schools to the competent Boards and finally standardised by the latter (predicted grades). Students who do not agree with the marks assigned on the basis of these measures, will be able to submit an appeal and take the exams physically in the first available session, at this time scheduled for November 2020 or January 2021.

The final results of **AS** and **A Level** will be announced on 13<sup>th</sup> August 2020, those of the **GCSE** on 20<sup>th</sup> August 2020.



Further details and updates are published regularly on the websites of the relevant institutions:

- <https://www.cambridgeinternational.org/Images/581512-Recognition-Awarding-grades-factsheet.pdf>
- <https://www.oxfordaqaexams.org.uk/support/news>
- <https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/campaigns/pearson-covid-19/rest-of-world-covid-19-coronavirus-update.html>

#### 4.12 Russia

In Russia the body responsible for how to obtain the final upper secondary school qualification is the [Ministry of Education](#). In Russia, to obtain the final title - *Аттестат о среднем образовании* - it is mandatory to take the state exam - *Единый государственный экзамен (ЕГЭ)* (National State Exam). Considering the current situation, after many meetings and discussions on the subject, the final decision was taken, confirmed more than once by the Russian minister of education - Serge Kravtsov - that the [National State Exam](#) will take place. Among other things, this exam since 2009 has also replaced the entrance exams to higher education. The exams took place from 29<sup>th</sup> June to 20<sup>th</sup> July, 2020. For this year only, unlike the others, to obtain the final diploma, students will not necessarily have to take the State Exam as the decision has been taken that the exam must be taken only by those students who wish to enroll in university. The others will still receive the final diploma but with the average of the marks obtained during the school year.

In addition, in view of the current COVID-19 emergency, the [Ministry of Science and Higher Education](#) has announced that all **accreditations** of higher education institutions whose accreditation expires in the period between 15<sup>th</sup> March and 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2020 will be automatically renewed for a further year, without releasing any additional documentation.

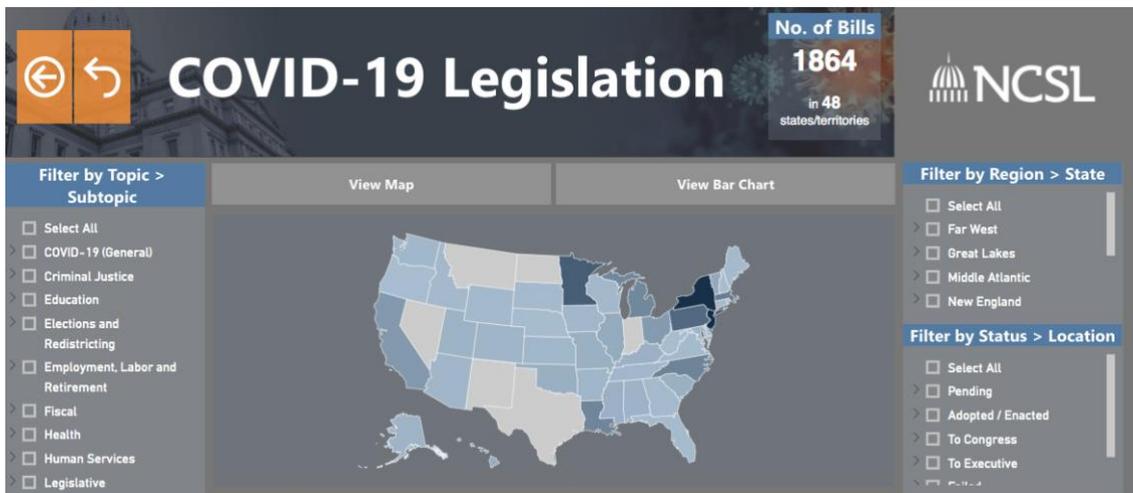
#### 4.13 United States of America

##### **Resources**

The US scenario is further complicated by the country's geopolitical structure: in the absence of a supranational central responsibility in the field of higher education and training of the US Department of Education, any decision on the matter - including the adoption of measures in response to the exceptional emergency situation still ongoing - is referred to the legislation of the individual State concerned, or even of the single “Jurisdiction” or of the single institution.

Therefore, sources capable of offering summaries and points of general and up-to-date observation on the situation of the 50 federal states are precious. Among these, we highlight in particular:

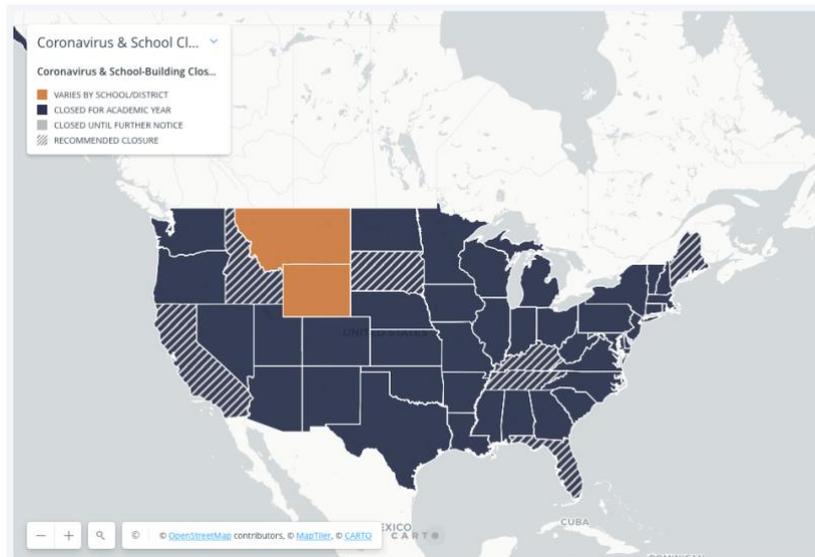
- **NCSL** (National Conference of State Legislatures), bipartisan non-governmental agency that regularly monitors and updates information on legislative measures adopted by each state, both at secondary education level (K-12 Education) and at higher education level (Higher Education):
  - [Public Education's Response to the Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
  - [Higher Education Responses to Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
  - [State Action on Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Database](#)



- **Education Week**, news website dedicated to the education sector, with a particular focus on secondary education, has developed an interactive map that photographs the state of closure of schools across the United States according to data from the National Center for Education Statistics. It has also conducted a comparative analysis on the impact that the COVID-19 virus has had on the requirements for the award of the final high school qualification and the greater or lesser flexibility that has been adopted by individual states:
  - [Map: Coronavirus and School Closures:](#)
  - [Data: How Is Coronavirus Changing States' Graduation Requirements?](#)

**State-by-State Map of School-Building Closures**

*Zoom in to see the status of individual states. Click a state to view more details.*

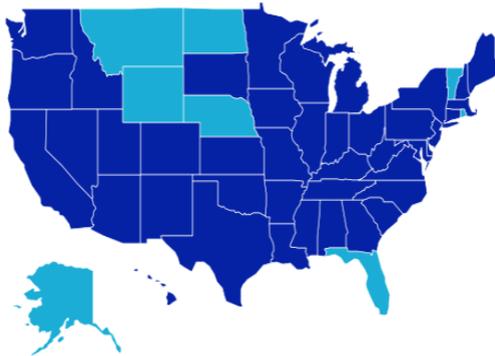




## Changes to State Graduation Criteria, Class of 2020

As of May 1, more than 40 states have officially offered flexibility for graduation for the Class of 2020.  
Hover over each state to see a summary of the changes.

● Flexibility offered ● Flexibility in progress



- **American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO)**, non-profit association that promotes the professional development of those who are responsible for international admissions and the evaluation of foreign qualifications within higher education institutions. It has developed guidelines for the management of international admissions in this particular phase of emergency caused by the COVID-19 virus, with practical suggestions to deal with the temporary impossibility for students to produce the required documentation due to the closure of the educational institutions where they have studied. Of interest:
  - [Protocol for International Evaluation COVID-19](#)
  - [Survey regarding Impact of COVID-19 on Grading, Transcript and Commencement Practices](#)
  - [Survey regarding Undergraduate Enrollment Indicators, Impact on Admissions Practice and Fall Course](#)

### **Admission requirements for higher education: SAT/ACT**

US institutions are completely autonomous in determining the admission requirements for national and international students to their courses. However, it is consolidated practice to request interested students to take the **SAT** (Scholastic Aptitude Test) or **ACT**, tests whose final score is decisive for access to higher education. The same is true of **AP** (Advanced Placements), advanced subject-specific courses that students choose to follow while attending the last years of high school, in order to present, at the time of the application for admission to university, a more competitive curriculum or to obtain the recognition of some credits during the first year of Bachelor degree studies (freshman year). APs are the only secondary level subjects that require a final test managed by an institution outside the school.

Due to the impossibility of holding the tests in this full pandemic phase, the exam sessions scheduled for 6th June (SAT) and 13th June 2020 (ACT) were cancelled:



- [SAT Coronavirus Updates](#)
- [ACT Coronavirus Updates](#)

The next sessions will not be available before September, November or even January 2021. For this reason, many university institutions have supported the call for greater flexibility during the admission phase, considering SAT and ACT as not mandatory.

### **Admission requirements for higher education / College Credits: AP (Advanced Placements)**

In this case the exams have not been cancelled but the way they are held has changed significantly. Over the past few months the College Board has supported schools operating all over the world by providing them with free e-learning resources, in order to give students the opportunity to complete the “AP” classes and to sit the final exam remotely. The updated calendar of exam sessions for each subject is online:

<https://apcoronavirusupdates.collegeboard.org/students/taking-ap-exams/ap-exam-schedule>

#### 4.14 Turkey

Starting from 23<sup>rd</sup> March, primary and secondary school teaching went completely online, through Turkish national TV channels and the development of *ad hoc* platforms for schools and universities. On May 4<sup>th</sup>, the Council of Higher Education ([YÖK](#)) announced that the Higher Education Institutions Exam ([YKS](#)) will be postponed until June 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>, 2020. This Exam took place regularly and the procedures for carrying it out, enrolling and publication of the final results were supervised by the Assessment Selection and Placement Center ([ÖSYM](#)).

#### 4.15 Ukraine

In the Ukraine, the [Ministry of Education and Science](#) regulating the education system has made the decision that the state exam - *Зовнішнє незалежне оцінювання (ЗНО)* - will take place. In Ukraine as well this exam is mandatory to obtain the final diploma of upper secondary school. The main period for the examinations was established - from 25<sup>th</sup> June to 17<sup>th</sup> July, and a second session was scheduled - from 24<sup>th</sup> July to 10<sup>th</sup> August.

In Ukraine, only for this year, the decision was made that the exam must be taken only by students who intend to enroll in university. The others will still receive the final diploma but with the average mark calculated in the light of the results obtained during the school year.

#### 4.16 West African Examinations Council

[WAEC](#) (certification body present in Ghana, Gambia, Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone) has postponed all final exams, currently scheduled between 3<sup>rd</sup> August and 5<sup>th</sup> September. However, the situation is very uncertain due to the increase in infected cases in African territory, particularly in Nigeria. The universities that have the capacity and the tools are organising to guarantee online lessons starting from September. Like the situation in the Arab world, the situation on the African continent is uneven and varies from country to country, bearing in mind that in this context, the impact of COVID-19 has cascading repercussions primarily on an economic and social level.

For more details:

<https://guardian.ng/tag/waec/>

**EUROPEAN STUDENTS' UNION**  
**LISBON RECOGNITION CONVENTION COMMITTEE BUREAU**

Rome/Brussels, July 7, 2020

**Impact of the COVID-19 virus on Higher Education and Recognition**

**Joint Communication from the President of the European Students' Union (ESU) and  
the President of the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee Bureau (LRCCB)**

In the COVID-19 era, all countries have made enormous efforts to ensure the continuation of study, teaching and research activities in the field of higher education, where the physical premises of the different institutions were locked down and access was denied, but there were no players among students, research and administrative staff who stopped their activity, indeed, everyone was called upon to adapt their duties flexibly to the current circumstances.

During this exceptional period due to the spread of the COVID-19 virus, many countries are still maintaining the award of final upper secondary school qualifications and many higher education institutions are at the same time guaranteeing the education of their students and the award of the relative final qualifications and degrees.

In order to secure the right to education during this period, exceptional measures have been put in place which differ from the normal award of final qualifications and in some cases includes the impossibility of obtaining the relative final diplomas from students.

We would therefore like to invite all countries, the ENIC and NARIC network centres and higher education institutions to adopt the most flexible recognition procedures possible in view of this exceptional situation, in line with the spirit and regulations of the Lisbon Convention, the only international legal instrument which once again proves itself flexible and adaptable to any context, in order to guarantee fair recognition procedures capable of ensuring the same academic rights of entry to higher education courses for qualifications from different systems, based on the criteria of reciprocity, trust and solidarity between countries and institutions.

**President of the Lisbon Recognition  
Convention Committee Bureau**



Luca Lantero

**President of the European Students' Union**



Robert Napier