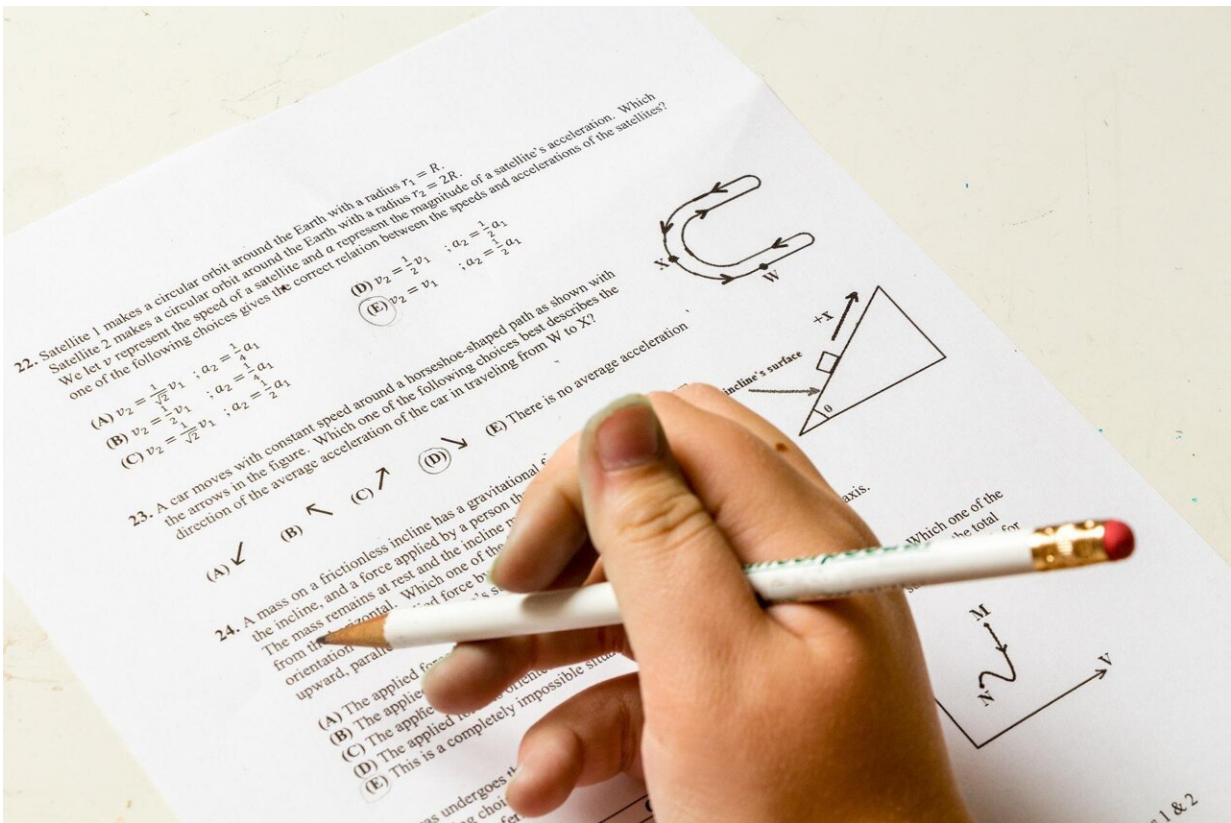


Study: High anxiety about GCSE exams has no effect on grades

June 15 2022



Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

No clear relationship exists between GCSE test anxiety and exam performance among Year 11 pupils, a UCL study has found.

Published today in the peer-reviewed journal *Oxford Review of Education*, the study explores whether GCSE grades are lower among Year 11 pupils (15/16-year-olds) who suffer from high levels of test [anxiety](#).

It reveals a difference of just one-fifth of a GCSE grade between the most anxious and least anxious groups, with no meaningful differences found across key sub-groups, based on prior achievement at school and socio-economic status.

While long-established literature has found that anxiety about testing is negatively related to [academic achievement](#), this study presents new evidence of a very weak relationship between how anxious Year 11s feel about testing and their GCSE outcomes.

Study author Professor John Jerrim (IOE, UCL's Faculty of Education and Society) said: "As GCSE exam season continues, this new research is the first to show that exam grades are virtually unaffected by [exam](#) worries.

"Although stress and anxiety about GCSEs is clearly an important challenge facing some [young people](#), this problem does not—on the whole—seem to have a large impact upon the grades that they leave school with.

"This could be due to the motivating impact of such anxiety—such as leading teenagers to spend more time revising and preparing for the exams—being enough to offset the potential negative effects, including test-anxious young people not being able to fully focus when they are revising.

"Alternatively, it may indicate that the measures necessary to alleviate such problems—such as extra time when taking the examinations or

support for text-anxious young people in their GCSE preparation—are already in place."

To calculate the findings, the authors explored data from Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2015—an international study of 15-year-olds' achievement in reading, mathematics and science—using a sample of 5,194 Year 11 pupils in England. Students were asked a series of questions designed to capture their anxiety around testing and assessment and had to state the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with five statements using a four-point scale.

Using these responses, pupils were then divided into 10 equally sized groups according to their levels of anxiety, and GCSE grades from examinations taken in May/June 2016 were compared across these 10 groups for children with the same background characteristics, similar levels of academic abilities (as measured by their performance on the low-stakes PISA test) and who attend the same school.

More information: John Jerrim, Test anxiety: Is it associated with performance in high-stakes examinations?, *Oxford Review of Education* (2022). [DOI: 10.1080/03054985.2022.2079616](https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2022.2079616)

Provided by Taylor & Francis

Citation: Study: High anxiety about GCSE exams has no effect on grades (2022, June 15)
retrieved 26 April 2024 from
<https://phys.org/news/2022-06-high-anxiety-gcse-exams-effect.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.