

21st January 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

I am writing to keep you updated about the planning to provide Year 11 students with GCSE grades this summer, following the announcement by the government earlier this term that the exams due to be taken in the summer have been cancelled.

Although there is no concrete news at this stage, we promised to keep you informed of any developments. On Friday 15th January OFQUAL (the exams regulator) published a consultation document with their proposals on how this process might work. Schools, parents and students are welcome to respond to the consultation. The full publication can be read using the following link and gives details on how you can take part in the consultation, if you wish:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-on-how-gcse-as-and-a-level-grades-should-be-awarded-in-summer-2021>

The main part of the proposal is that students' GCSE grade will be formed via a teacher assessment of their performance. To aid this process, OFQUAL have proposed that students will sit some assessment tasks in their subjects. These tasks would be set externally by the exam boards, but they would be marked internally by school staff. The assessments will not be the length of normal GCSE papers. Performance in these assessments would be considered alongside other evidence to help determine a grade. It has been proposed that there will be some external verification of grades issued. This might take place in the form of the assessment papers being moderated. To summarise the outline of the consultation proposal:

- students would continue with their education during this academic year
- students would be assessed by their teachers in a period beginning in May into early June
- teachers would submit grades to the exam boards by mid-June
- external quality assurance by the exam boards would be ongoing throughout June
- results would be issued to students once the QA process is complete, most likely in early July
- student appeals could be submitted immediately following the issue of results and would first be considered by schools and colleges

We will follow the results of the consultation process very closely. Of course how things proceed will depend very much on when students are permitted to return to school. In the meantime, the best advice we can give our students is to keep working! It is important that they continue to complete the work that is being set by their teachers and complete the content of their GCSE courses. If the assessments tasks completed in the summer are to be set externally then they could cover any aspect of the syllabus.

To ensure that the students are well prepared for any external assessment, it is very important that students continue to test themselves and regular assessments will be part of the work that teachers set. Not only will this help the students understand how well they are doing, it will also provide their teachers with important information about which areas require further work, both during the lockdown and when the students return to school. To support this process our students will be asked to complete three assessment tasks at the same time as other students in the Trust who are following the same course. This will enable our staff to share some of the responses with staff in other schools and help to standardise a shared understanding of different levels of achievement. This could be very helpful preparation for the summer assessment tasks and we hope to moderate these as well. The first of these three tasks will be undertaken in the week beginning Monday 1st February.

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We know that assessments done from home cannot be 'verified' as there are no controls over the conditions in which they are completed e.g. time taken, support provided, resources used e.g. books/internet etc. We are also aware that some students are entitled to specific 'Access Arrangements' prearranged and agreed by the exam boards. Any assessments undertaken will be most useful to staff if they are completed under normal assessment conditions. This will give their teachers more useful information about where the priorities are.

I would like to end this letter by praising our students for the positive approach they are taking during these uncertain times. They are doing very well indeed. Our tracking of Google Classroom indicates a very high level of engagement and the completion rate of work is excellent. I am also delighted to hear that students have been communicating with their teachers in a very mature way when support has been needed or clarification sought. I think this bodes very well for them over the next few weeks.

The closure of schools was initially confirmed to continue until the end of this half term. I hope that we are able to get the students back to school as soon as possible after that. If the current situation were to continue for longer we just want to ensure that we have made suitable contingency plans to understand how well the students are doing and prepare them thoroughly for any external assessment in the summer term.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have questions about this process.

Thank you for your support.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "P. Hudson". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Peter Hudson
Vice Principal