



Dear Parent/Carer,

I am writing to you with an update on the process being put in place to award the Key Stage 4 grades for summer 2021.

The process, whilst still not 100% confirmed, is becoming increasingly clear as to how schools are to award the Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs). Alas, I am still not able to tell you everything, I can certainly update you on our plans.

1. How will my grades be awarded this summer?

Grades for GCSEs and most other qualifications including vocational qualifications will be based on a process involving teacher assessment against national standards, internal quality assurance, and external quality assurance by the exam boards.

The national process defined by the Department for Education and the exams' regulator, Ofqual is as follows:

- Teachers will assess your work against a national standard, which will be defined by the Exam Boards
- All subjects will submit grades that will be quality assured. Quality assurance is a system where decisions are checked for accuracy or error. Our own internal quality assurance process will have to be signed off by the Exam Board to ensure it is rigorous and in line with national standards
- Our school will be quality assured externally by the Exam Boards, which may include random sampling of our school' evidence.
- If the Exam Boards are confident in our submitted results, then the Exam Boards will award your final grades
- If you do not think your results are accurate, you will have the right to appeal

2. What about loss of learning / impact of Covid?

This year, because of the continued disruption of the pandemic we will only assess students on content they have been taught.

3. Will my son or daughter still take an Exam?

As widely publicized by the media, 'exams' have been cancelled. However, schools are being asked to produce an evidence base from which they can assign a TAG. In order to provide the students with as many opportunities as possible to demonstrate their expertise, we have put two assessment windows in to the school calendar. The first of these is scheduled for the week beginning the 22nd March. The second window starts on the 6th May. For the remainder of this academic year we will prepare the students for these assessments.

As previously explained if we have not taught a topic we will not test that topic, but neither will we narrow the curriculum. In other words, your teachers will ensure you are taught sufficient content of the courses so that they are ready for the next steps of their education.

4. What evidence will we use to determine grades?

We are required to determine the evidence base, which is appropriate to each specific subject being studied.

Most evidence will come from assessments, PPE exams and other testing. In some cases, this will be added to with coursework, practical work and portfolio evidence. The final judgement will therefore use a range of evidence. For example in Art and Design's case a student's grade will be based on the portfolio only, whether or not it has been completed and there will be no written examination.

Each piece of evidence will be given an individual weighting. For example, mock results taken earlier in the year will have a great deal lower and less significant weighting than the assessments being taken in March and May. Each subject's evidence base and weighting will be different to take into account what has been taught and in consideration of the specific nature of the subject.

5. What about issues of malpractice and or bias?

We will follow precisely the arrangements set out for the awarding of grades.



The integrity of the grading decision is paramount. It is important to state that you or your child must not attempt to influence the process. No student will be disadvantaged. If there is something important that ought to be taken into consideration we will!

As with GCSE awarding last year we are instructed that we must not share the grade that will be submitted to the Exam Board with you or the students.

The most important way a student can influence their grade in the summer, is to work hard now!

6. So, do individual teachers award the grade?

Simply: no. The grade they achieve will start with the teacher's assessment of their performance across a range of evidence. This is against a nationally-defined standard, not the teacher's own opinion. This assessment is then subject to both internal and external quality assurance before the final grade is awarded by the exam body as usual.

To ensure fairness and consistency there will be a strong quality assurance system that is subject to external scrutiny and test.

As the senior leader responsible for outcomes, I will only approve the centre declaration when I am absolutely confident that all grades have been assessed fairly and accurately. Once approved, it will go to the Headteacher (as head of centre) for final sign off and submission.

7. Will grades be different between different schools?

No, the standard against which teachers will be using assess is set nationally by the exam boards. This is the standard that will be used during external quality assurance and appeals to ensure consistency and fairness across the system.

8. In the end, does this mean grades are decided by an algorithm?

No, unlike last summer, students' grades will not be changed by a formula. The internal and external quality assurance measures will all be done by humans, not an algorithm. There is no limit on their achievement, providing their teachers have the evidence that they are working at that grade.

9. Can students make the case for why a student should get a higher grade?

Our teachers will use their professional expertise to assess students on the content they have been taught. Teachers are unable to submit higher grades for students unless they have the evidence that they are consistently working at this level. If teachers submit higher grades without evidence, they are committing exam malpractice.

10. Can students discuss their grades with teachers?

No. Teachers will only be able to discuss which evidence they are using to inform their judgement with students.

11. What should students do to improve their grades?

The best thing that they can do is to continue to attend classes, learn, act on feedback from the teachers and prepare for the assessments. The grade will be based on their performance, and so their outcomes are ultimately in their own hands.

12. What is the timeline for the remainder of the academic year?

In order to allow us to submit grades to the Exam Boards on or before 18th June, the timeline below shows what the Year 11 school journey looks like until the end of the year. Like all parts of education under Covid secure protocols, it may be subject to change.

22 nd March	Assessment window 1
2 nd April	Easter Holidays
19 th April	Start of Summer Term
6 th May	Assessment window 2
6 th May	Assessment leave begins
31 st May	Half term



7 th June	Moderation and Quality Assurance begins
18 th June	Grades submitted to the exam boards
12 th August	GCSE results released

As with normal years, students will receive a personalised assessment timetable for both assessment windows. I am unable to report the exact date that our year 11 students will no longer be required to be in school, however, they will need to be available until 18th June in the small chance the quality assurance process requires it.

13. Results days

12th August GCSE results released

Nearer the time, we will write to you to inform you as to how results will be released. This information will also include how we will continue to support students on the result day. .

14. Appeals

As there rightly should be, there will be opportunity to appeal. In the summer we will ensure when we issue the results that we explain and share with you the appeals process. As with all appeals, results can go up but indeed can also go down.

I hope that I have answered the majority of questions and concerns you may currently have. Once again, I apologise that I am unable to give you all the answers, but we are working through some difficult times. Please be reassured that whatever is announced over the coming days and weeks, we will be working with year 11 to get them over the finish line and into whatever their Post 16 plans may be.

In the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact me at the school should you have any questions and Miss Horne and the tutor team are on hand daily in tutor time for any other enquiries. Please keep encouraging and supporting your child through these most difficult of times and, most importantly, please keep you and the family safe.

Yours faithfully,

P Whitehouse (Assistant Headteacher)