

Sent: 26 February 2021 08:12

Subject: On behalf of Mrs Purnell: The Awarding of GCSE, AS, A-Level and Vocational Qualifications 2021

Dear Students, Parents and Carers,

Following the joint DfE and Ofqual consultations which were held last month, Ofqual have now published the results and have confirmed how grades will be awarded this summer

The consultation decisions can be accessed in full for both [GCSE, AS and A-Levels](#) and for [Vocational, Technical and other qualifications](#). I have also attached two infographics which illustrate how qualifications will be awarded, a [link](#) to some FAQs, and have summarised some key details below which I hope you find useful:

Teachers' Judgements

- Results will be based on teachers' judgements about students' performance.
- Teachers can use evidence of a student's performance from throughout the course to inform their judgement.
- Grades should be determined as late in the academic year as is practicable, and not confined to a defined window to give teachers increased flexibility.
- Schools and colleges should use a broad range of evidence across the taught content to determine the grades before submitting the grades to the exam boards.
- Students should continue to work on their non-exam assessment (NEA), including for Project qualifications. NEA will be marked by teachers and will contribute to the overall grade, whether or not it has been completed. NEA will not be moderated by exam boards.
- Grades must be submitted to the exam boards by Friday 18th June.

The Syllabus

- Teachers must assess their students' performance only on content which has been delivered to them by their teachers. This is in order to address the issue of differential learning loss as it is recognised that some students across the country have experienced more disruption to their learning than others.
- Delaying the decision on the overall final grade as late as possible is to enable teaching to continue and allow further coverage of the syllabus.
- Heads of centres will have to confirm that students have been taught sufficient content to allow progression to the next stage of their education, although Ofqual will not set requirements about the minimum amount of content that students must have been taught.

Exam Conditions

- There will not be any compulsory exams this academic year.
- Exam boards will provide a package of support materials to include questions and mark schemes, as well as advice for teachers about content coverage, topic selection, marking and making grading judgements.
- Exam boards will produce a series of questions in every subject and teachers will be able to choose whether or not to use these with students. These will be based on past questions, although will also include a proportion of previously unpublished questions for every subject.

- Exam board set questions will not be compulsory for schools to use and will not need to be taken under exam conditions.
- Teachers can determine whether they are taken at school or at home and how long students have to complete them.
- Even if teachers do use exam boards' set questions, they can also use other pieces of evidence: coursework, homework, practice assessments and essays.

Standards

- Overall, it will be no easier or harder for a student to achieve a particular grade this year compared to previous years.
- Schools must quality assure (QA) their judgements and should consider the profile of results in previous years as a guide to help them to check that their judgements are not unduly harsh or lenient.
- Exam boards must also put in place processes to quality assure the QA measures in schools; in a sample of centres, they will also review the evidence for one or more subjects.

Results Days

- Results days will now be on **10 August for AS and A level, and 12 August for GCSE** results.

Appeals

- Following the publication of results, students who believe their grade does not reflect the standard of their performance will be able to appeal to the school to check whether a procedural or administrative error has been made.
- If the school finds that it has made an error and has submitted the wrong grade to the exam board, it will be able to explain the mistake and ask the exam board to change the grade. If the exam board is satisfied with the rationale, it will issue a revised grade.
- If the school does not believe an error has been made, a student can ask the centre to appeal to the exam board on their behalf. The school will provide the exam board with the evidence used to determine the student's grade, together with the justification for the grade, the student's concerns and the details of the process used to determine the grade.
- If the exam board decides the grade is supported by the evidence submitted by the school, it will not change the grade. If it does not, it will change the grade.
- **A student's grade could go up or down following an appeal.**
- The Secretary of State for Education has made it clear to Ofqual, that students should have the opportunity to sit exams in the autumn if they are not happy with their result. Ofqual will consult further on how the arrangements for an autumn exam series will work.

Vocational Qualifications (BTECs, Cambridge Nationals and Cambridge Technicals)

- Qualifications will also be awarded based on teachers' judgements of learners' performance as it is not viable for external exams to continue as normal.

The flexible approach taken, alongside the decision to only assess students on content that has been taught, will allow us to assess and award our students in the fairest way possible and afford them every chance of success. We are now taking time to digest the published guidance in full and determine our own, considered assessment plan, both at whole school and individual subject level, to ensure we fully adhere to the published decisions and set out what we've always intended to do: to assess and grade in the most fair, transparent and supportive manner so that all have the opportunity to achieve their own Personal Best. We will also liaise closely with, and take feedback from, our partner schools and will keep abreast of the upcoming details on support materials, moderation, training and quality assurance processes.

Students, as we have said before the most important thing for you to do now is continue progressing through your planned curriculum by engaging, working hard, responding positively to feedback, and taking care to look after your wellbeing. You still have many weeks of learning left and will have various, planned opportunities to demonstrate what you know, understand and can do. Despite the challenges and uncertainty you have faced over the past year, you have demonstrated fantastic levels of resilience and we are very proud of you. You all have the potential to be remarkable.

We look forward to welcoming back students on site for face-to-face teaching from Tuesday 9th March for years 11 and 13 and Wednesday 10th March for year 12.

Kind regards,

Carly Purnell

Headteacher