



3rd February 2021

Dear Year 11 and Year 13 Students,

In order to alleviate some of the anxiety that you may naturally be feeling about summer assessments, I wanted to write with a sense of what we believe is likely to happen. At the moment, there is a large degree of intelligent guesswork being done by all schools.

However, we feel that we have a sense of the direction of travel from the extensive consultation the Department for Education (DfE) carried out with Ofqual (the exams regulator), which closed on Friday. The outcomes of the consultation should be published in the next few weeks. Once they are published, the exam boards will kick into action and work with schools to provide guidance and training on how to deliver this fairly for all students. Below are some key points from the consultation, and underneath them is what we are planning at this stage and what you can do now. It is important that you understand that these are things that *seem* to be likely, but may well turn out to be different when the outcomes are published. I am sorry that we cannot be more definite now.

Key points from the DfE/Ofqual consultation

1. Grades will be submitted to exam boards by schools based on **specific evidence** – they will be a reflection of the level you are working at then, *not* a prediction of what you *might* have achieved, were you to sit a standard GCSE/A-level (which is what last year's Centre Assessed Grades were).
2. The **types of evidence** allowed will be set by the DfE. Currently these look like mock exams, formal tests, and other 'substantial pieces of work' (most likely coursework where this is an element).
3. It is likely that schools will be allowed to choose **how many pieces of work** they would like to take into account when deciding final grades. These pieces of work will be identified well ahead of you actually sitting them so that you know what counts and what doesn't (I hope by the end of this term at the latest). We want to keep this number small so that stress for you is minimised, but there is still a range of evidence. They are unlikely to be retrospective (i.e. work you did in October will not count towards your final grade – hopefully you will see this as a good thing).
4. There is a strong sense that the DfE **will ask exam boards to provide shorter formal tests** for schools to use. So we might expect a range of 'mini papers' in each subject, and it seems likely that teachers will be able to pick and choose from them.
5. The DfE want this process to be fair for all students in the UK, so may allow schools **a degree of freedom to choose the content of the exams/tests** to suit the learning that their students have done. If you have missed some course content in a subject because of the disruptions of three lockdowns, we should be able to set papers that play to your strengths, and don't leave you disadvantaged.
6. There is likely to be a **limited time period** in which these pieces of evidence can count towards a final grade. This will be a point in the summer term that will give you enough time for effective preparation and practice. This is expected to be a short window, with the results of tests completed closer to the end of the school year given the highest weighting in teacher judgements. You will know this well in advance (I hope by the end of this term), so we will not spring any 'tests that count' on you with no notice.

7. Once all the pieces of evidence are marked and the marking is moderated by other teachers, we will submit your grades to the exam board. They will then check that our processes have been fair and in line with what they have prescribed for schools, before issuing you with your final grades. (For A-levels, this may happen earlier in the summer than normal to allow time for appeals before universities see your grades and accept you on to their courses.)

8. It is likely that you will be able to **appeal** any grades that you feel are unfair. We do not yet know whether there will be any 're-sit' opportunities in the autumn.

What we are planning at this stage

With all the above in mind, our priority is to enable students to achieve the grades they deserve, that are fair and don't undervalue their work. We are determined to try and reduce the anxiety surrounding summer results and want to be as transparent and clear with students as possible. However, you will appreciate that this is a challenge when there is very little definite information available now.

We are most keen to receive the Government guidance on the following elements:

- The time frame in which we are able to collect evidence of students' achievement.
- Exact details of how much of the course will be tested and how teachers will assess students.

We hope to provide students with **at least two** opportunities to sit assessments in school. It is important that students are aware that:

- We want to give you time to fully prepare for these assessments and make sure you know exactly what is going to be assessed and the format of the final assessment. Therefore we will publish the dates and content of any assessments with as much notice as possible.
- The School is working on ways to moderate internal assessments and ensure that it follows marking criteria set by the exam boards.
- While some students may not be able to come in to school for exams (depending on covid restrictions and travel opportunities), only grades where the School can certify the tests were completed under fair conditions will be able to be used.
- While we will continue to provide you with feedback/grades based on how you are performing (classwork, homework, assessments, etc.), it is important that you are aware your final grade will be based on specific criteria set by the exam boards. Therefore, the final grade may go up or down from any grade you have previously received.

What should you be doing now?

You should continue to work diligently, attending all lessons and submitting all work to the very best of your ability. After half-term, programmes of study will move away from new content, with lesson and study tasks typically focussing on consolidation and revision. You will also have support with revision strategies. It is important that you keep your Tutor informed about any challenges you are facing, or worries that you may have. Usually, we can offer a solution or reassurance quickly.

I hope that this offers some reassurance and a broad sense of the likely shape of the assessments this summer. It may well leave you with more questions, of course: please feel free to raise them with your Tutors, Mr Johnson (Year 11) or Mr Swinburne (Year 13). They will do their best to help, and we will be in touch again when we receive more detail from the Government.

Yours sincerely,



Mr W Chuter
Head

cc: Year 11 and 13 parents and teaching staff