

Friday 3 April 2020

Dear Parent / Carers

I write further to my letters of 20 and 24 March 2020 — where I outlined the Department of Education's initial response to the confirmation that all assessments and examinations have been cancelled for this academic year — to inform you that this morning Ofqual, the independent qualifications regulator, published details of how GCSEs, AS and A Levels will be awarded for students this summer.

I summarize below for your convenience the key points from the detail, and attach a copy of a letter to all students from Sally Collier, the Chief Regulator of Ofqual, which will hopefully help answer some questions that our students (and you) will undoubtedly have. In addition, all detail can be accessed from the following links:

- Information for schools, students and parents on how GCSEs, AS and A level qualifications will be graded and awarded in summer 2020.
www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-as-and-a-level-awarding-summer-2020
- Letter to all GCSE, AS and A level students this summer from Sally Collier Chief Regulator, Ofqual
[assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/877830/Letter to students - Summer 2020 grading.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/877830/Letter_to_students_-_Summer_2020_grading.pdf)
- A direction from Gavin Williamson MP, Secretary of State for Education, to Sally Collier, Chief Regulator of Ofqual, about calculating summer 2020 grades in lieu of exam results
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/direction-issued-to-the-chief-regulator-of-ofqual>

GCSE, AS and A-Level grades summer 2020

In summary:

- (1) The summer 2020 exam series has been cancelled in order to help fight the spread of the Coronavirus.
- (2) Students due to sit exams this summer will be awarded a calculated grade through a process developed and overseen by Ofqual, the independent qualifications regulator, which is based on an 'assessment of the grade they would have been most likely to achieve had exams gone ahead.'
 - This will apply for all students in Y11 and above (including those taking A levels in Y12). Currently, Ofqual are proposing 'that grades will not be issued for students in Y10 or below.'
- (3) As *one part* of this process, schools will generate and submit to exam boards for each student in each subject a 'centre assessment grade' and the 'rank order [of] students within each of those grades'.
 - The **Centre Assessed Grade** is our 'fair, reasonable and carefully considered,' objective professional judgement — derived from evidence and reviewed by subject teachers and subject leads — about the grade that each student is most likely to have achieved if they had sat their exam(s) and completed any non-exam assessments this summer.

- ⇒ For students who have had access arrangements, these judgements will ‘take account of likely achievement with the reasonable adjustment/access arrangement in place.’
- ⇒ Centre Assessment Grades are not the same as target grades or predicted grades provided to UCAS in support of university applications.
- ⇒ There is no requirement for schools to set additional mock exams or homework tasks for the purposes of determining these centre assessment grades, and no student will be disadvantaged if they are unable to complete any work set after schools were closed.
- The **Rank Order** of students is the position a student has, for example, compared with all those students with say a grade 5 in GCSE mathematics, or a grade B in A level biology — so a rank order of 1 is the most secure/highest attaining student, and so on. Again, this rank order is our ‘fair, reasonable and carefully considered’ professional judgement derived from evidence and reviewed by subject teachers and subject leads. Exam boards will use this information to help their standardization process to ensure that schools do not submit inflated grades.
- The deadline for schools to submit centre assessed grades and rank orders to exam boards will be ‘no earlier than 29 May’.
- In arriving at these centre assessed judgements, we will ‘only take account of evidence about student performance,’ including, ‘where available’, and in no particular order:
 - ⇒ Information on each student’s performance over the course of study, such as progress reviews, classwork, bookwork, and/or participation in performances in subjects such as music, drama and PE.
 - ⇒ Performance on any non-exam assessment, ‘even if this has not been fully completed.’ (Please note, also, that schools should not be asking students who have not yet completed any non-exam assessments to do so. So, in other words, if your child is in the middle of any such non-exam assessment, they do not need to complete nor submit it. Where non-exam assessments have been completed and submitted, this will obviously form part of the evidence — we will also retain such pieces of completed non-exam work should students decide they want to enter in a subsequent exam series).
 - ⇒ Performance in mock examinations, as sat at the college in December 2019 and February 2020, and the progress students have made between them alongside the rates of progress students typically make from mock to examination performance in the College in respective subjects (in recent years and considering observed changes in practice this year).
 - ⇒ The tier of entry in tiered subjects, i.e. if a student is entered for the higher tier in mathematics, the only centre assessed grades we can submit would be 9-3 or U, whilst if a student is entered for the foundation tier, the only centre assessed grades we can submit would be 5-1 or U.
 - ⇒ For A level students who took AS in 2019, their AS results in that subject.
 - ⇒ Performance in any class or homework assessments.
 - ⇒ Previous results across subjects at the college.
 - ⇒ The performance of this year’s students compared to those in previous years

- (4) On submission of centre assessed grades and rank orders, the process to produce the final grades will begin. Ofqual will ensure, as outlined by Gavin Williamson MP, Secretary of State for Education, that as far as is possible, 'qualification standards are maintained and the distribution of grades follows a similar profile to that in previous years'. In other words, '[s]o that the final grades awarded are as fair as possible, exam boards will standardise the judgements across different centres once they have been submitted, using a statistical methodology developed in conjunction with Ofqual.'
- The statistical model used by Exam boards will aim to 'standardise grades across centres in each subject.' Whilst this model is still in development, it 'will combine a range of evidence including: expected grade distributions at national level, results in previous years at individual centre level, [and] the prior attainment profile of students at centre level.'
 - If, when compared to the evidence from the statistical model, our centre assessed judgements 'are more generous than would be expected, then the final grades for some or all of [or] students will be adjusted down. On the other hand, if it appears that [our] judgements are more severe, then the final grades for some or all of [our] students will be adjusted up.'
 - To this end it is important for students and parents and carers to note that the centre assessment grades we submit and the final grade that students receive could be different.
 - Please also note, as stated by Sally Collier, Chief Regulator of Ofqual, the centre assessed grades we submit are 'confidential.' We '**must not**, under any circumstances, share the centre assessment grades nor the rank order of students with students, or their parents/carers or any other individuals outside the centre.' I respectfully ask, therefore, that students or parents and carers do not ask teachers, or anyone else at college, for the grades we will be sending to the exam boards or where we have placed students in the order of students. To reiterate, we are simply not allowed to share this information.
- (5) The final, calculated grades awarded to students will be formal grades, i.e. with 'equal validity to the grades awarded in other years and should be treated in this way by universities, colleges and employers.'
- (6) The aim is that 'results won't be delayed after the dates they were expected in August, and ideally they will be issued a little earlier.'
- (7) Students will be able to appeal if they do not believe a correct process has been followed. Ofqual state that they 'are considering what arrangements might be put in place to allow an effective appeal and will consult on proposals shortly.' We will, of course, ensure that you are fully aware once such arrangements are confirmed.
- If students feel that the calculated grades they will be awarded this summer 'do not reflect their ability [they] will have the opportunity to take their exams in the autumn series or in summer 2021.'
 - As outlined in my letter of 24 March, we therefore advise students who were due to sit examinations this summer to continue their preparations and continue to work at home in case they wish to sit the exams that will be available in autumn 2020 of summer 2021.

I want to reassure you, again, that we will approach this process of providing centre assessed grades and rank orders with experience, rigour and integrity — endeavouring to ensure objectivity and fairness for all our students. We will not rush into making judgements about the centre assessed grades or rank orders we submit to exam boards; we will ensure that our judgements are not made in a hasty manner. We have eight weeks before we must submit the grades and rankings we will ensure over this time that the grades we submit are an objective and fair reflection of what we would have expected students to achieve based on the range of evidence we have.

As always, stay safe, stay at home, and look after each other. And again, please do not hesitate to contact us should you have any queries or require any clarification.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Brett', is placed over a white rectangular box.

Derrick Brett
Principal

Links to current advice

(Please do check these pages regularly as they are updated constantly.)

- HM Government main coronavirus page
www.gov.uk/coronavirus
- Okehampton College COVID-19 Latest Updates and Home Learning
www.okehamptoncollege.devon.sch.uk/covid-19-updates.html
- NHS Health information and advice
www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/
- Full guidance on staying at home and away from others (social distancing)
www.gov.uk/government/publications/full-guidance-on-staying-at-home-and-away-from-others
- Guidance on social distancing for everyone in the UK and protecting older people and vulnerable people at increased risk of severe illness from coronavirus (COVID-19)
www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-social-distancing-and-for-vulnerable-people
- Guidance on shielding and protecting people defined on medical grounds as extremely vulnerable to coronavirus (COVID-19)
www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19
- Stay at home guidance for households with possible coronavirus (COVID-19) infection
www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance
- Information for parents and carers about the closure of schools
www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers
- Free School Meals Guidance
www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-free-school-meals-guidance
- Guidance for schools about temporarily closing
www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-school-closures/guidance-for-schools-about-temporarily-closing
- Maintaining Educational Provision (including 'Critical Worker' lists and principles).
www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision
- Guidance on vulnerable children and young people
www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-vulnerable-children-and-young-people
- Guidance for educational settings on COVID-19
www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-educational-settings-about-covid-19/guidance-to-educational-settings-about-covid-19
- Guidance for the public on the mental health and wellbeing aspects of coronavirus
www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-public-on-mental-health-and-wellbeing
- Information on the cancellation of GCSEs, AS and A levels in 2020
www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-cancellation-of-gcse-as-and-a-levels-in-2020
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