

20th January 2021

Dear Year 11 and Parent/Carer,

Re: Consultation on how grades should be awarded in summer 2021

We are committed to keeping our Year 11 students, parents and carers informed of key information relating to the awarding of GCSE and Vocational/technical qualifications this summer. I apologise for the length of this correspondence but hope it helps to identify the key aspects of the consultation.

On Friday 15th January, the Department for Education (DfE) and Ofqual published a joint [consultation on how GCSE, AS and A level grades](#) should be awarded in summer 2021. The document is 46 pages long and has an online consultation with 68 questions. This consultation is open to students, parents/carers, and teachers. The deadline for the consultation is **Friday 29th January at 23.45pm**. We will be sharing the key messages with Year 11 this week from Mrs Whiting and myself which we will also email to students.

A parallel consultation on alternative arrangements for the award of [vocational and technical qualifications \(VTQs\)](#) and other general qualifications in 2021 has also been launched.

GCSE and ALevel Examinations

Below I have extracted key pieces of information from the consultation document.

It is the DfE's view (Consultation on how GCSE, AS and A level grades should be awarded in summer 2021, pages 8 and 9) that:

'...in summer 2021 a student's grade in each subject will be based on their teachers' assessment of the standard at which the student is performing. In the absence of exams, our view is that teachers, once provided with the necessary guidance and training, are best placed to assess the evidence of the standard at which their student is performing. This consultation seeks views on our proposals, including how to support teachers to make their assessments fairly and consistently.

*We propose that the final assessment will be made towards the **end of the academic year**, at about the time students would have taken their exams.*

*To help teachers make objective decisions, we propose that exam boards should provide guidance and training, and **make available a set of papers, which teachers use with their students as part of their assessment**. This consultation seeks views on whether such papers should be provided and, if so, what form they should take (could they, for example, use materials from previous past papers), when they should be made available, and whether their use should be mandated. We propose that, where it is part of the qualification's existing specification, teachers will continue to assess any non-exam assessment that a student has undertaken in a subject.*

*We propose that teachers should **draw on a range of broader evidence of a student's work** in making their final assessment. Students who are studying independently (for example, those who are home educated) must also be given an opportunity to demonstrate the standard at which they can perform.*

We propose that all students should be able to appeal their grade. We are seeking views on the timeline for the proposed arrangements.

In summary we propose that:

- 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.*

Within the consultation (pages 9 and 10) the DfE also state that:

We do not propose to ask teachers what grade a student might have received if they had been able to take their exams – which is what teachers were asked in 2020.

We propose grades this year should be based on teachers' assessments of the evidence of the standard at which their students are performing; it should indicate their demonstrated knowledge, understanding and skills.

Vocational Subjects

Arrangements for VTQs and other general qualifications (including BTECs, Cambridge Nationals/Technical)

“We want to ensure that students taking these qualifications are not advantaged or disadvantaged in comparison to their peers taking GCSEs, AS and A levels.” **(page 11)**

- Ofqual's proposals seek to ensure coherence as far as possible between the arrangements for GCSE, AS and A level and Vocational and Technical Qualifications and other general qualifications.*
- For qualifications most similar to GCSEs, AS and A levels awarding organisations would be expected to use similar approaches to assessment and awarding.*
- It is the view of the Department for Education that those qualifications which received a 'calculated result' in summer 2020 (including BTEC, Cambridge National and Cambridge Technical) should fall in scope of the proposed policy this year because those qualifications were most similar to GCSE, AS and A Levels and were used to support progression to further study or into employment.*
- ...this would require some form of teacher assessment to replace exams.*
- The alternative arrangements will seek to ensure that these learners are not disadvantaged and can receive results, irrespective of whether they sat an external examination in January 2021*

- *As already announced, written exams scheduled for February and March are no longer considered viable to go ahead.*
- *Where assessment has already been completed, this should be taken into account when awarding a result.*
- *Internal assessment should continue remotely wherever possible, whilst recognising that not all internal assessment can be completed by all students because of the disruption caused by the pandemic.*

Whilst we await the outcome of the consultations this makes it clear once again that students should **continue to attend their “live” lessons, complete their online learning and work to the very best of their ability making every piece of work count.**

As a school, we will be responding to the consultations and as stated above these are open to students and parents/carers to respond to should you wish to do so. The consultations are open for two weeks starting on Friday 15 January and ending on **Friday 29 January at 23:45pm.**

The online consultation response forms can be accessed via the following links. [GCSE, AS and A Level](#) and [VTQs and other general qualifications.](#)

Our teachers and staff remain committed to supporting students to complete their qualifications to the best of their ability, so that they can progress to further study, apprenticeships or into employment this summer.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'K Hand', written over a horizontal line.

K Hand
Interim Headteacher