



9 March 2021

Dear Parent/Guardian

### **Further Guidance for Students and Parents How will Grades Be Awarded this Summer?**

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

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

1. Teachers will **assess students against a national standard**, which will be defined by the examination boards before the Easter break.
2. Departments will submit grades which will be **quality assured by the school**. This internal quality assurance process will have to be signed off by the examination board to ensure it is rigorous and in line with national standards.
3. Our results will be **quality assured externally** by the examination boards, which may include random sampling of our school's evidence.
4. If the examination boards are confident in our submitted results, **then the examination boards will award students their final grades**.
5. If students do not think their results are accurate, they will have the right to **appeal**.

#### **So, do teachers award the grade?**

Simply: No. The grade students achieve will start with their 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 examination body as usual.

#### **Does this mean grades are decided by an algorithm?**

No, unlike last year, 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 the achievement of students, providing they have evidence that they are working at that grade.

#### **What about loss of learning/impact of COVID-19?**

This year, teachers will only assess students on content they have been taught – because of the continued disruption of the pandemic. This means students will not be disadvantaged if they individually, their whole class or whole year group have been unable to complete their full course. However, grades can only be submitted on the basis of the evidence we have of students' performance, even if that evidence covers less of the course than usual. Students who would usually have extra time and examination access arrangements in the examinations will benefit from the same arrangements in teacher assessment.

**Will grades be different between different schools and colleges?**

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

**What evidence will be used?**

Teachers are able to draw on a range of assessment evidence from across a student's study of the course. This may include Non Examined Assessment, homework tasks, PPE examinations, and papers set by the examination boards. This may include evidence from before the second lockdown, as well as evidence from March – May. The examination boards are producing assessment materials that will be sent to us before Easter. Different departments may use different sources of evidence and there is no requirement for any one type of assessment to be used – it is about a performance across a range of evidence.

**The examination boards are only giving out past papers, how is this fair?**

Most of the assessments provided by the examination boards will be drawn from past papers, although there will be new questions as well. There is significant research that even if students have seen assessments questions before, it does not reduce the validity of the assessment. Furthermore, examination board questions are only one of the many pieces of evidence we will use to assess students this summer.

**Can students and parents make the case for why a student should get a higher grade?**

Our teachers are already using 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 examination malpractice.

In 2020, any undue pressure by student or parent who placed undue pressure on teachers to increase grades was also considered examination malpractice. It is likely to be the same for 2021.

If students or parents are found to be putting teachers or leaders under undue pressure to increase grades, then this matter will be referred to the examination boards and an investigation into malpractice may ensue. This may result in the student's certificate being removed entirely if malpractice is deemed to have taken place.

**Can students discuss their grades with teachers?**

Teachers will tell students when they are able to discuss which evidence they are using to inform their judgement, including marked or graded pieces of work. This will not be until after the Easter Holidays due to examination board announcements. All students in Year 10, Year 11, any Year 12 students taking examinations and Year 13 students will have this explained in class. The Year 11 and Year 13 parent consultation evenings have been moved to help provide time for these as well.

**Can students ask for their final submitted grade?**

We are not allowed to disclose their final submitted grade we give to the examination board.

Students should not attempt to second-guess the grade submitted, as teachers will be using a range of evidence to inform their final judgement.

Students must not pressure teachers to reveal the grades they are submitting, or to increase the grades, as doing so may be considered examination malpractice.

**What should students do to improve their grades?**

The best thing students can do is to continue to attend classes, learn, act on feedback from their teachers, revise, and read around their subject. Their grade will be based on their performance and so their outcomes are ultimately in their hands.

**When will students be told the timetable for assessments?**

We are planning on releasing the exact timetable for the assessments in the final week of term, once the examination boards have released their materials.

I hope this has answered some of the questions which we have been asked over the last few weeks. This is all the information we have at the moment, however if you would like any further clarification then please contact [exams-tsa@yare-edu.org.uk](mailto:exams-tsa@yare-edu.org.uk).

Yours faithfully

***P Hookway***

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