



Dear Parent/Carer

Awarding GCSE and A level Qualifications in Summer 2021

Following the announcement by the Department of Education regarding the cancellation of public examinations this year I am writing to you with further details of the process we will use across the school to determine student grades. As you will be aware grades this year will be based on teachers' assessments of the evidence of the standard at which their students are performing. Teachers are encouraged to use a range of methods to gather the necessary evidence to support the grading of students. This evidence may come from classwork, homework and assessments. The deadline for submission of these grades to the exam board is 18th June 2021.

You were sent a link to a video created by the school which outlined the approach we will be taking. The link is here:

http://www.westcoventryacademy.org/exams_2021.aspx

Since then some dates have changed but the principles remain the same.

We have two designated "Assessment Weeks". These have changed to the week beginning 19th April and week beginning 17th May 2021. Assessments for Year 11 and 13 will take place in lessons during these weeks. Students will be issued with a timetable and a list of topic areas to focus their revision and preparation on. Revision materials will be available on Teams for students to access over Easter.

There may well be other opportunities during this time period for students to demonstrate the standard at which they are performing. These will be communicated to students by subject teachers.

I have included a list of frequently asked questions with answers which may help answer any further queries you may have about the process. As always, should you have any further questions please email: SUMMER2021EXAMS@westcoventryacademy.org

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 exam body as usual. So the grade will be a "School Assessed Grade".

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? 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 in the exams will benefit from the same arrangements in teacher assessments.

Will grades be different between different schools and colleges? No, the standard against which teachers will be assessing students is set nationally by the exam 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, up until May half-term. This may include homework tasks, mock exams, and papers set by the exam boards. This may include evidence from before the second lockdown, as well as evidence from March — June this academic year. The exam 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's about a performance across a range of evidence.

The exam boards are only giving out past papers, how is this fair? Most of the assessments provided by the exam 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, exam board questions are only one of the many pieces of evidence we may 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 exam malpractice. In 2020, any undue pressure by student or parent who placed undue pressure on teachers to increase grades was also considered exam 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 exam 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 be able to discuss which evidence they are using to inform their judgement with students and how students can improve upon work submitted. However, we are not allowed to disclose the final submitted grade we give to the exam 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 exam 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 do students finish in the summer? The official leaving date for students in Year 11 and Year 13 has not yet been confirmed by the Department for Education. We will inform students and parents as soon as we know.

When are results available? Results day for A levels and Level 3 BTECs will be on the Tuesday 10 August. Results day for GCSEs and Level 2 BTECs will be on the Thursday 12 August. Further information regarding how these days will be organised will be communicated closer to the time.

As always, we continue to put students at the heart of every decision we make. We would urge them to take advantage of every opportunity given to them by their subject teachers in the coming weeks, so they are able to maximise their potential and do the very best they can.

Yours sincerely

Ana Neofitou
Headteacher