

25 March 2021

Dear Students, Parents and Carers

I hope you and your families are safe and well. This letter explains how we will be awarding grades for 2021.

This has, of course, been a demanding term, so it is important to keep going and stay motivated, as there is a definite purpose to your studies.

Can I thank all our students for everything they have done over this term. They have battled on in the face of very demanding circumstances and deserve huge credit for keeping going and staying focused. Additionally, I would like to pay tribute to our staff who have done a sterling job – many thanks to them also. And can I also thank our parents and carers for their continued support and well wishes.

### **How will grades be awarded this summer?**

Grades for GCSEs, A levels, and most other qualifications including applied generals (BTEC's/Cambridge Technicals, etc.) will be based on a process involving teacher assessment against national standards, internal quality assurance, and external quality assurance by the exam boards.

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

1. Teachers will assess students against a national standard, which will be defined by the exam boards before the Easter break.
2. Departments will submit grades which will be quality assured by the college. This internal quality assurance process will have to be signed off by the exam board to ensure it is rigorous and in line with national standards.
3. Our college results will be quality assured externally by the exam boards, which may include random sampling of our college's evidence.
4. If the exam boards are confident in our submitted results, then the exam 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 exam 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?**

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 based on 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 assessment.

### **Will grades be different between different 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 will be able to draw on a range of assessment evidence from across a student's study of the course, up until 28 May. This date allows sufficient time for final grades to be decided by teachers and internal quality assurance to take place. We must then submit our final grades to the exam boards by June 18. This may include assignments, coursework, key assessments, and papers set by the exam boards. This will also include evidence from before the second lockdown, as well as evidence from March – May. 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 is about a performance across a range of evidence.

### **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?**

Our teachers will discuss which evidence they are using to inform their judgement with students, including marked or graded pieces of work.

However, we are not allowed to disclose their 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 about students who are SEND or have an EHCP that have special exam considerations?**

All students that are entitled to these arrangements should have already been contacted by Learning Support to assess need and to confirm their support entitlement during any formal exams and assessments that take place in college. These arrangements will be put in place for any mock exams held or formal assessments carried out in college this year that form part of the evidence to award grades to individual students.

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

A-Level and GCSE students will be undertaking two further Key Assessments (KA3 in March and KA4 in May). How they perform in these key assessments will contribute significantly to their final grade. For those A-Levels that also have a coursework element, this will also contribute to their final grade as usual.

For Vocational subjects, unit delivery is being adapted in accordance with awarding body guidance, so that our students are not disadvantaged and are able to complete sufficient evidence to be awarded grades for each unit. Their final grade will be formulated through the accumulation of their unit grade profile.

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

Attached to this letter is an update on twice weekly COVID-19 testing at home for students and our expectations for students who have a positive test or display COVID-19 symptoms.

We would like to take this opportunity to wish you all an enjoyable Easter break, and we look forward to seeing all students on their return on Monday 12<sup>th</sup> April.

Yours sincerely



**Mohammed Ramzan**  
Transition Principal & CAO

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