



Our Ref: SCU|RCL|021

12th March 2021

Dear Year 11 and 13 Parents / Carers,

It has been wonderful seeing your children back to school earlier this week and while many have found this week tiring, most students have settled back into the structure and routine of face to face learning. All our students are to be commended on the incredible resilience and maturity they have shown during this period. We fully recognise the anxiety that has been caused by the announcement on the 4th of January, that the summer exams would not go ahead. As we approach the closing stages of Key Stages 4 and 5, I wanted to provide a detailed explanation as to how GCSE and A-level qualifications will be awarded this Summer.

Over the next few weeks, we will be conducting the final assessment pieces to collect evidence on students' performance. A timetable of subject assessments will be published next week and teachers will support students by providing the details of what topics the students need to revise in preparation for the upcoming assessments.

How will grades be awarded this summer?

Grades for GCSEs and A levels will be based on a process involving teacher assessment against national standards, internal quality assurance by the school 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 school**. 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. Rednock school results will be **quality assured externally** by the exam boards, which may include random sampling of our school'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 on the basis of the evidence we have of students' performance, even if that evidence covers less of the course than usual. Students who

Head Teacher - David Alexander BA (Hons); MSc

would usually have extra time in the exams will benefit from the same arrangements in assessments marked by teachers.

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 18th May. At Rednock, this will include mock exams, formal class assessments, non-examined assessments (NEAs) and papers set by the exam boards. This may include evidence from before the second lockdown, as well as evidence from March to June 2021. 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 assessment 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 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 exam malpractice.

In 2020, any 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, 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.

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.

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We hope that this information helps to reassure you and your child of the exam process over the coming months. We are confident that students will rise to the challenge. Rest assured that we will support and guide at every step of this journey and our only goal is to ensure that students are awarded the right grades in a fair and equitable manner. We wish you and your children all the best as we work through this challenging time. Should you have any concerns please do contact your child's tutor so that we can address them.

Yours faithfully,



Dr Sharron Cunningham

Deputy Headteacher

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