

Court Fields School

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Executive Head: Mrs S Watson

26 February 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

Firstly I hope that you and your families are well and keeping safe.

Thank you for your patience as we have waited for guidance regarding the provision in light of the Government's cancellation of the Year 11 Summer exams 2021. Yesterday, we received further information from the Government about the process for awarding GCSE grades this summer.

Please find attached with this letter a summary document produced by the Government, which has a range of FAQs that students and parents may find useful. Full information regarding the process can be found here [Guidance on the assessment process on GOV.UK](#), as well as an e-version of the Parent Guide here [Guide for parents and students](#)

The statement from the Secretary of State for Education was as follows:

"Teachers will be able to draw on a range of evidence when determining grades, including the optional use of questions provided by exam boards, as well as mock exams, coursework, or other work completed as part of a pupil's course, such as essays or in-class tests. No algorithm will be used.

Teachers will submit grades to exam boards by 18 June, allowing as much teaching time as possible before teachers make their assessments.

Results days for GCSE, A level and some vocational qualifications will take place in the week of 9 August – moved forward from the week of the 23 August. These earlier dates provide additional time for appeals to be completed, so students reliant on those outcomes to achieve their university offer have the best chance of accessing a place. To support teachers in making their judgements, exam boards will provide detailed guidance before the end of the spring term.

Staff across education have been going above and beyond to support young people through the pandemic, and the guidance published by boards will be designed to minimise any additional burden this year's awarding process may place in teachers and staff.

Students studying vocational and technical qualifications (VTQs) will also receive grades assessed by teachers rather than sitting exams.

Schools, colleges and other educational settings will conduct multiple checks – such as checking consistency of judgements across teachers and that the correct processes were followed - to ensure as much fairness as possible. At the same time, exam boards will conduct their own checks, through a combination of random sampling and more targeted scrutiny where they identify cause for concern.

Every student will have the right to appeal their grade.

The proposals being taken forward were supported in responses to the department and Ofqual's largest ever consultation, with over 100,000 responses of which just over half (52%) came from pupils."

Essentially this means that students will need to do the following:

- Work to the absolute best of their ability over the next 3 months.
- Ensure that they attend all lessons once school re-opens from 8th March.
- Complete all NEA/coursework urgently in line with teacher direction.
- Attend any afterschool revision/coursework sessions as directed.
- Revise for their forthcoming set of PPEs as if these were the formal examinations.



This will give our students the best possible chance of gaining the grades of which they are capable, because we will be able to evidence this standard when asked by the Exam Boards.

We have started to work through this latest guidance and will continue to follow the further information as it is released by the Government, Ofqual and the Exam Boards. Please be absolutely assured that we will take great care in managing this important task for your child. Our staff have already been preparing for this eventuality and will undertake the required next steps with the greatest of professionalism.

Once Year 11 students return to school we will issue their Leavers' Hoodies, which they will be able to wear instead of their jumper or blazer. Please note that any other hoodies/sweatshirts will not be allowed. If students wish to purchase a Leavers' Hoodie, but have not yet done so, they should inform Mrs Greenfield in the LRC, who can look to place a second order. During the week of the 8th March we will also be undertaking 1:1 Tutorial meetings with every student in Year 11 and members of the Senior Leadership Team, or other senior staff. This will enable us to discuss their priorities for school return, ensure they have applied for and secured next steps Post-16, and are ready for their final few months at Court Fields School.

Our Year 11 Prom has been scheduled for 9th July, and, if the timeline proceeds in line with the Government roadmap, we will be able to hold the Prom as planned. This will be fantastic, and I hope that the whole Year Group will join us as part of this rite of passage at the end of Key Stage 4.

We are very proud of our Year 11 students, who have, as a group, responded with commendable maturity to these extraordinary times. If they follow the guidance from their teachers, Tutors, Head of Year and SLT they will gain the results of which they are capable. I hope that they will all ensure that they commit to working with us, so that the effects of this pandemic, whilst unfair and difficult for many, and traumatic for some, do not adversely impact on their futures.

I will write to all parents and carers early next week with full information regarding the process of all students returning to school.

As always please do not hesitate to contact the school if you have any other questions/queries. Please note that phone lines are set to an answer service as we have a limited staff team in school so we keep as many staff safe and at home. It may, therefore, be easier for you to email us as follows:

- For Year 11 specific concerns or questions, please contact Mr Williams, Head of Year 11 by email
- For safeguarding concerns, please use the following email address: safeguarding@courtfields.net
- For general enquiries, please use the main email address: sch.552@educ.somerset.gov.uk

Thank you once again for your support, which is very much appreciated. My very best wishes go out to you and your families. Keep safe and keep in touch.

Yours sincerely,



Mrs Polly Matthews
Headteacher

What you need to know about grades in 2021

GCSE, AS and A level exams will not be going ahead as planned this summer.

Today, we have announced that students will receive grades determined by teachers, with pupils only assessed on what they have been taught and not what they may have missed. Here is what this means for you and your families.

What has been announced today?

This year, we will ask those who know students best – their teachers – to assess them so they can progress to the next stages of their education or careers and not be disadvantaged by the disruption of the last year.

Why are teachers determining grades?

We want to ensure all young people can have the confidence that, despite exams not going ahead, they will still receive a grade that reflects their ability and enables them to progress to the next stage of their education, training, or employment. Fairness is at the heart of the system designed to replace exams.

[We held a consultation](#) with the exams regulator, Ofqual, to ask what the public thought about our proposals. We received over 100,000 replies with more than three quarters coming from parents/carers and students. There was broad support for the proposals.

How are you going to guard against grade inflation?

Exam boards will issue grade descriptors and example answers to help teachers make sure their assessments are fair and consistent. These will be broadly comparable to performance standards from previous years, so teachers and students are clear what is expected for each grade. Combined with a rigorous quality assurance process, this system will ensure grades are fair, and consistent. Quality assurance by the exam boards will provide meaningful checks in the system.

How will the grades be assessed?

Grades will be based on what students have been taught, not what they've missed.

Teachers will be given clear guidance to support them in assessing their students. They will use a range of evidence, which could include mock exams, coursework and other work completed as part of a student's course, such as essays or in-class tests.

Exam boards will also provide optional sets of questions for teachers to use to help them gather evidence. There will be a combination of published and unpublished questions and teachers will be able to select groups of questions that reflect what they have taught.

What are the timings for this?

Teachers will submit grades to exam boards by **Friday 18 June 2021**.

Results days for GCSE, AS, and A level and some vocational qualifications will then take place in the week of **Monday 9 August 2021**. This will give extra time for any appeals to be assessed.

What processes will be in place to ensure the grades are as fair as possible?

Before grades are submitted, students will be told what evidence is being used to assess them. Students can see this evidence and tell their teachers about any mitigating circumstances they think might affect their grade.

Schools will make sure that their assessment process is fair, using guidance from exam boards. Exam boards will also check schools – both a representative sample of all schools and colleges, and more targeted checks using risk-based criteria.

How will the grading standards be set?

Teachers will consider each student's performance using the sources of evidence they are using for their cohort. They will make an evidence-based judgement of the grade each student is performing at.

What if a student believes their grade is wrong?

As in any other year every student will have the right to appeal their grade. If they believe their grade is wrong, they can ask their centre to check for errors. If the student still believes their grade is wrong, their centre can then submit an appeal to the exam board on their behalf. The exam board can confirm whether the grade is reasonable based on the evidence. If not, they will determine the alternative grade.

An exam board will only revise a student's grade where the evidence cannot reasonably support that grade, rather than as a result of marginal differences of opinion. Students should be aware that grades can go up or down as the result of an appeal.

What about private candidates?

Private candidates will be assessed in a similar way to other students, by working with a centre on a range of evidence. Ofqual and the exam boards will provide guidance to help exam centres assess these candidates. We are working to ensure sufficient centres are available at an affordable cost. The list of centres will be published soon.

Vocational and technical qualifications and other general qualifications

What's happening for a vocational and technical qualifications, like BTECs?

Students studying vocational and technical qualifications (VTQs) that are similar to, and taken alongside, or instead of, GCSEs and A levels will also receive grades assessed by teachers rather than sitting exams. The arrangements will be similar to those for GCSEs and A levels. This will be the case, for example, for many BTECs, Cambridge Nationals and Technicals, Tech Levels, Technical Awards and Technical Certificates. These arrangements will also apply to T Level core assessments.

What about students who are taking a vocational and technical qualification to go straight into a job?

If you are taking a VTQ to go straight into employment, your exams and assessments will continue where they can be delivered in line with public health measures, including remotely. This is because you need to demonstrate a necessary professional standard in an occupation.

What about students taking Functional Skills?

Exams and assessments for Functional Skills will continue where they can be delivered in line with public health measures, including remotely. If you can't access the assessments, you will get your result through teacher assessed grades.

What about students taking the International Baccalaureate or Pre-U?

You won't have exams. Your result will be issued based on teacher assessment, in a similar way to GCSEs and A levels.

When will students know if they are having an exam or not and what evidence is going to be used for their teacher assessed grade?

The awarding organisation that provides your specific qualification will be setting out its plans for each qualification from 25th February onwards. You should check individual awarding organisation websites to see the approach for your qualification or speak to your school or college.

When will students get their results?

If you are taking your qualification in order to get into college or university, your result will be issued in the week of Monday 9 August, in line with A levels and GCSEs.

Results for other VTQs will be issued throughout the year as usual.

What if a student thinks their grade is wrong?

If you are unhappy with the results you receive you will be able to appeal. Awarding organisations have their own appeals processes, but if you are awarded your qualification through teacher assessment, you will have access to a right of appeal on the same basis as those set out for GCSEs, AS and A levels.

Will students be able to take an exam in the autumn if they are not happy?

Depending on which VTQ you are taking, there may already be an opportunity in the autumn or winter to take an assessment. Check with your school or college in the first instance.

We are also working with Ofqual to decide whether there is more needed, beyond the existing autumn and winter assessment windows. Ofqual will consult on this over the coming weeks and will provide more information soon.