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## **Q&A Summer Grades, Exam Malpractice and Appeals**

### **How has my child been graded this year?**

Grades for GCSEs, A-levels, 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 exam boards.

In our school we have used a range of evidence to reach a holistic judgement for each student. This includes formal assessments sat under exam conditions, a selection of class work and non-exam assessment (coursework) and practical performance in some subjects.

Our Centre Policy details the approach we have taken as a school.

### **Why have there been so many assessments when exams were cancelled?**

National exams were cancelled in January, and all schools and colleges had flexibility about how to arrive at a fair and robust grade for each student.

Throughout the early summer term, we have been using exam-style assessments, drawing on the assessment materials provided by exam boards, as we think this will produce the most reliable, and therefore fairest, evidence.

### **What evidence has been used in each subject?**

Our Centre Policy details the high-level approach we are taking as a school or college. Your child's subject teacher will have already let students know what evidence is being used for the year group.

Please note, that teachers and leaders will use their professional judgements about how to respond to mitigating circumstances; and this may vary between subjects depending on the impact it had on the assessment. Teachers will record how any mitigating circumstances were responded to.

### **My child usually has access arrangements (e.g. extra time) in exams. Have they this year?**

If a student is eligible for any sort of access arrangements as part of their SEND provision, then they have been given it in the assessments we have carried out.

### **Can we know the grade submitted?**

No, we are legally obliged not to let students or parents know their submitted grade before results day.

In some subjects, students may receive grades or marks for certain assessments that may count towards their grades; but this is at the department's discretion. Students do not have an automatic right to know their grades or marks in a subject's assessment, just because they've been told marks in another assessment.

## **The assessments you're doing are different from another school. How is this fair?**

Schools have been given a lot of flexibility in how they decide a holistic teacher assessed grade this summer. This means that it is likely the assessments will look different in various schools, even ones in the same area.

Students should only be assessed on what they have been taught, to account for variations in lost learning due to the pandemic, the range of evidence will differ between schools and colleges, and even between students within our school.

Our approach has been approved by the exam boards; but many different approaches have also been approved. This does not mean one approach is better than the other.

## **I don't think my child's teacher will judge them fairly?**

All staff members have undergone objectivity and bias training. This is detailed in our Centre Policy, which has been approved by the exam boards. You can see the training that was provided [here](#).

All of the grades will be signed off by two members of staff, including the head of department. All grades will be signed off by the head of centre.

We will also have to send a sample of work into the exam boards, ensuring that grades are fair and accurate.

## **What is exam malpractice?**

Exam malpractice this year includes students fabricating evidence (e.g. claiming plagiarised work is their own), they or their parents placing undue pressure on teachers to submit a certain grade, as well as teachers fabricating evidence.

If malpractice is proven, the exam boards may decide to withhold the qualification altogether.

Our approach to authenticating evidence is set out in our Centre Policy.

## **How can I appeal?**

If your child is unhappy with their grade this summer, they will have the opportunity to resit all GCSEs in the autumn. Students should speak to the exams officer about entering the autumn series.

There is also the option to appeal a grade on the following grounds:

- Administrative error – you think the school or college has submitted the wrong grade for you
- Procedural error- you think the school or college did not follow our process correctly
- Error of academic judgement – you do not think the grade submitted reflects a reasonable judgement on either the evidence that was used, or the grade arrived at.

All appeals will first be processed as a centre review. Following the outcome of the centre review, students can choose to take forward an appeal to the exam board(s), which we will do on their behalf. Please note that at any stage of the appeals process a student's grade(s) could go up or down. If the appeal process decides that the submitted grade was too high, students will not be able to keep the higher grade. Schools will require students to sign a declaration saying that they understand this before an appeal is submitted.

## **My child has work at a higher grade than the work used as evidence. Can they appeal?**

Students have already been told what evidence is being used. If they want to raise any mitigating circumstances about this, they should do so as above. Just having a higher-graded essay is not, in itself, grounds for mitigating circumstances – although this request will be recorded.

When it comes to appeals, exam boards will be considering whether any teacher acting reasonably could have used the same evidence and reached the same judgement. This is different to whether other alternatives would have been equally as valid.