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where everyone can succeed



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20th May 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

I hope you and your families are well.

Further to my previous correspondence regarding the Teacher Assessed Grades process, I wanted to share some further information regarding assessment evidence and mitigating circumstances.

As you know, students have been working hard over this half-term to produce work and complete assessments that will contribute to the broad range of evidence being used to decide their final grades in each subject. Any remaining assessments for our Year 13 students are being completed in school this week and the evidence to be used to determine grades is being finalised. The remaining time until the deadline for submitting grades to the exam boards on the 18th June is needed for robust internal quality assurance to take place, which will ensure the validity of the final grades.

By way of a reminder, the JCQ/Ofqual guidance makes it clear that, in most cases, the range of evidence that teachers use to inform an individual student's grade will be consistent across the cohort for each qualification. However, in a small number of cases, a school can decide that a slightly different range of evidence may be more appropriate to inform a student's grade, for example, if the student has missed significantly more teaching than other students in a class or there are other mitigating circumstances.

The JCQ guidance outlines that schools should make students aware of the final evidence that will be used to form the basis of the grades submitted. Therefore, as mentioned in my previous letter, during lessons next week, teachers will share with students the list of evidence that will be used to inform their final grade, so that students have the opportunity to raise any concerns about the evidence being used, for example, if the evidence was affected by personal circumstances at the time, such as an illness or a bereavement just before the assessment was completed. We are confident that we are already aware of the vast majority of personal circumstances for our students, given the excellent communication between parents/carers and students and the pastoral team, and we will ensure that any such information is fully considered when finalising grades. However, students will be given an opportunity to share any further information in all of their subject lessons next week, to ensure that we are aware of all students in Year 13 who have mitigating circumstances.

As stated clearly in the JCQ guidance, the school will make the final judgement about which evidence is used. The guidance also stipulates that under no circumstances will a teacher be able to tell a student or a parent/carer the final grade submitted to the exam board.

You can be assured that the evidence being used is in line with exam board guidance for each subject but it will vary between subjects, due to the nature of different subjects. The evidence reflects the assessments and the work that the vast majority of students have undertaken in each subject and we are very confident that, in all subjects, valid grade judgements can be made. There will be some students who may have missed a particular assessment or piece of work being used for the final evidence for the cohort but this should not be an issue as, in the vast majority of cases, the other evidence will be enough to award a fair and appropriate grade. If departments have any concerns about a lack of evidence for any students then, in line with JCQ and exam board guidance, they will identify and use alternative evidence for the individual student.

Mitigating Circumstances

As outlined above, we are already aware of, and have identified, the students in Year 13 who we feel have mitigating circumstances from the past two years which may have impacted on assessments or other evidence at particular times. This is equivalent to the Special Consideration process for a normal examination series.

We have also identified students who have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 related absence during this academic year. Like many schools, there was quite a lot of absence due to COVID-19 in Year 13, especially in the autumn term. The government guidance outlines that schools should consider the general level of COVID-19 absence in a year group when considering which students have been disproportionately impacted. For Year 13, this is COVID-19 related absence of more than 20 school days in total and/or 15 school days in a half term.

Whilst we are fairly certain that we are already aware of the vast majority of mitigating and/or personal circumstances for our students and we will ensure that this information is fully considered before final grades are determined, during next week students will be given a further opportunity in all subjects to share with us on a 'Student Declaration Form', details of any evidence they feel was affected by personal circumstances at the time. On this declaration form for each subject, students will also confirm all assessment evidence is their own work and that they have not been given inappropriate levels of support to complete it. This will be completed next week.

Furthermore, if any parent/carer feels that the personal circumstances of their child may have affected any evidence in a subject, or if they have any questions, they should email us with this information, also by the end of Friday 28th May 2021, using the following email address, rather than the normal school admin email address, TAGenquiries@st-marys.newcastle.sch.uk

Determining Final Grades Using Assessment Evidence

As I have described previously, the final grades will be determined by each department on the basis of our professional judgement of all of the evidence for each student. Exam boards have given subject specific guidance to support departments in this process. Teachers have also received training and guidance on all aspects of this process, including training on making objective judgements that are free from bias. Grades will not be determined through any sort of algorithm; departments will consider the weighting of the different assessments and other evidence, taking into account the nature of the evidence and when this work was completed. Whilst more recent evidence will have greater weighting, the overall judgement is a holistic one so that no single piece of evidence will have a disproportionately positive or negative bearing on the overall grade. A robust internal moderation process will be completed to moderate all grades, complemented further by robust external moderation by exam boards.

Please can I remind you that teachers are not permitted to discuss the final grades being submitted with students or parents. Also, there will be no further discussion of any recent assessment grades. Whilst we understand that students are eager for information, any approach by students or parents to discuss final grades could be interpreted as an attempt to influence the final grade which is regarded as malpractice by JCQ.

I hope that you and your son/daughter finds this information useful and thank you again for your continued support.

Very best wishes,



Miss Patterson
Headteacher