



26 March 2021

Dear Parent/Carers and Year 11/13 students

As we begin the Easter break, we would like to update you on the process for the awarding of GCSE and A level grades in 2021, as well as provide more information on the class based assessments to be undertaken in the summer term.

This week, Ofqual has released 'Information for Heads of Centre' which confirms the overarching expectations of schools (more specific guidance and materials are due to be published by the exam boards next week to support the practical application of the process.)

Ofqual has confirmed the following points:

1. Grading decisions and profiles

- In coming to a judgement, centres should seek to make it no easier or harder for a student to achieve a particular grade this year compared to previous years.
- The expected performance standard for a grade has not changed.

2. Evidence

- Evidence should relate to the specification content and should reflect, as far as possible, the sorts of questions and tasks that students would normally undertake in preparation for the qualification.
- The centre will make the final judgement about what is to be included.

3. Communication with students and parents

- Centres should make students aware of the sources of evidence that will form the basis of the grades submitted before the grades are finalised, although students should not be told the final grade that is submitted to the exam board.
- Centres should be careful to avoid teachers being put under pressure from students, parents or carers to submit grades that are higher than the evidence supports. Heads of Centre should keep records of such cases. Exam boards may treat such cases as potential malpractice.

4. Sign-off/declarations

- Each grade for a subject must be signed off by at least 2 teachers in that subject, one of whom should be the head of department or subject lead. Where there is only one teacher in the subject or department, or only one is available, the head of centre should be the second signatory.
- The Head of Centre is also expected to confirm the grades have been checked for accuracy and that students' grades are based on an appropriately broad range of evidence that is their own work.

As we have previously communicated, this is an evidence-based process and it is important that students have the opportunity to provide the best possible evidence of their performance in each of their subjects. Therefore, in order to begin gathering key, additional evidence, students have begun to work on a number of class-based assessments. These class-based assessments are different to examinations, and in most cases they are shorter, cover more specific sections of each course, and are taken in a less formal environment; we hope that students will find them less stressful than an examination series. All students with access arrangements will receive those arrangements. Assessments will be arranged at the time that the teacher judges it right for the class, with lessons between an individual subject's assessments; students will be given notice of each assessment by their teacher.

We are now expecting students to take time over Easter to prepare for class-based assessments using guidance provided by their teachers. They should expect to undertake a number of these assessments over the following half-term with the aim of demonstrating their very best performance across a range of tasks. These additional assessments will contribute to the 'evidence bank' that will be used to arrive at a final, submitted grade.

Once we have received and considered the examination board guidance, we will provide a further, more detailed, update about the process.

Whilst we appreciate there are mixed emotions about the cancellation of exams, there is every opportunity for students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills and receive the grades they deserve. Taking the opportunity to prepare will be key to their success.

Of course, alongside this 'preparation work' we do expect students to have some time to relax and recharge over the Easter break, so they return focused and prepared for the hard work ahead.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shapland', written in a cursive style.

James Shapland
Headteacher