



19<sup>th</sup> March 2021

Dear Year 11 and Year 13 students

## GCSE and A Level Update

This letter is to update you on the process for grading this summer, and some key dates over the next few months.

### How will grades be awarded this summer?

Grades for GCSEs, A levels, and vocational qualifications will be based on a process involving teacher assessment, internal quality assurance, 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 use a range of evidence to assess you, including work/assessments that you have already completed, mock exam results, and 'little and often' assessments over the next two months.
2. Departments will submit grades which will be quality assured by the school senior leaders and QEGSMAT leadership. 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. Our school results will be quality assured externally by the exam boards, which may include random sampling of our evidence.
4. If the exam boards are confident in our submitted results, then the exam boards will award you the final grades.
5. If you do not think your results are accurate, you will have the right to appeal.

### So, do teachers award the grade?

Simply: no. The grade you achieve will start with your teacher's assessment of your performance across a range of evidence. 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, your grades will not be changed by a formula or a computer program. The internal and external quality assurance measures will all be done by humans, not an algorithm. There is no limit on your achievement, providing there is evidence that you are working at that grade.

### What about loss of learning/impact of Covid?

Your teachers will only assess you on content you have been taught – because of the continued disruption of the pandemic. This means you will not be disadvantaged if you individually, your whole class or whole year group have been unable to complete your full course. However, grades can only be submitted on the basis of the evidence we have of your performance, even if that evidence covers less of the course than usual. Those of you who would usually have extra time in the exams will benefit from the same arrangements in teacher assessment.

### **What evidence will be used?**

Teachers will use a range of assessment evidence from across your study of the course. This could include evidence throughout the course, as well as the 'little and often' assessments over the next two months. The exam boards are producing further guidance and 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 is about your performance across a range of evidence.

We will provide you with an overview of the evidence departments will be using by 23<sup>rd</sup> April. This may differ slightly from student to student, and you will get further detail on that after 23<sup>rd</sup> April.

### **Can you and parents/carers make the case for why you should get a higher grade?**

Our teachers are already using their professional expertise to assess you on the content you have been taught. Teachers are unable to submit higher grades for you unless we have the evidence that you are consistently working at this level. If teachers submit higher grades without evidence, we are committing exam malpractice.

In 2020, any undue pressure by 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 you 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 your certificate being removed entirely if malpractice is deemed to have taken place.

### **Can you discuss your grades with teachers?**

Teachers will be able to discuss which evidence they are using to inform your judgement with you, including marked or graded pieces of work. We will let you know which evidence we are using. However, we are not allowed to disclose your final submitted grade we give to the exam board. You should not attempt to second-guess the grade submitted, as teachers will be using a range of evidence to inform your final judgement. You must not pressure teachers to reveal the grades you are submitting, or to increase the grades, as doing so may be considered exam malpractice.

### **Information in GO 4 Schools**

The 'Current Predicted Grades' were entered in GO 4 Schools before Christmas and have not been updated since. They were designed to help guide you while preparing for final exams. This is no longer the situation you face so we have removed this field from your view in GO 4 Schools. Teachers will still inform you of their assessment results, e.g., what mark/percentage has been achieved, and the key focus still will be on what to do to improve further. This is not intended to be secretive or suggest a lack of confidence in our assessments, but we do not want to cause further stress to our students which may arise from such misunderstandings or confusion between these grades and the final 'Teacher Assessed Grade' that we submit to the exam boards.

### **Key Dates**

We propose the following timeline, including final dates for teaching and assessments. We do not anticipate assessments beyond these dates but are awaiting further guidance from the exam board. Please be aware that these dates could change, and you may need to be in school up until 18<sup>th</sup> June.

- An overview of the evidence that will be used by departments will be shared with you by Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> April
- Year 13 teaching and assessments completed by Friday 14<sup>th</sup> May
- Year 11 teaching and assessments completed by Friday 21<sup>st</sup> May
- Entries submitted to the exam boards by Friday 18<sup>th</sup> June
- A Level results day is on 10<sup>th</sup> August and GCSE results day on 12<sup>th</sup> August

- Results for vocational qualifications will be no later than these dates.

### **End of May and Beyond**

We know how important those rites of passage are at the end of such an important stage in your life, and we are making plans for as much as possible after the teaching and assessments are completed. We hope to include:

- Leavers' assembly/barbecue with the usual shirt signing!
- Careers advice, mock interviews
- Bridging courses/transition for students progressing to Sixth Form and university
- Enrichment opportunities including sports, music, arts and drama

### **What to do now?**

The best thing you can do is to continue to attend classes, learn, act on feedback from your teachers, revise, and read around your subject. Your grade will be based on your performance (not your targets/flight path), and so your outcomes are ultimately in your hands. We have been impressed with your maturity and resilience this year, so continue to meet those expectations and participate fully in school until May half term and beyond.

Also remember that it is not just the grade that counts. We also want to help you prepare for the next stage, whether it be Sixth Form, college, university, apprenticeship or the world of work.

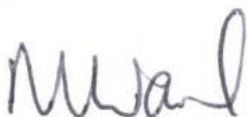
### **Support and Advice**

We appreciate that these are still uncertain times for you and that the next few months may be challenging and unsettling for some. If you do find things difficult or worrying, please remember that we are here to help you and that you can access advice and support at any point via your Form Tutor, Progress Leader and the Deputy Head/Head of Sixth Form. There are also other agencies/services that we can signpost you to for help with your mental health and wellbeing, this includes access to our team of school based Mental Health Champions, counselling services, the school nurse and online support groups. Please get in touch with us if you would like further information on this.

### **Questions?**

- If you have questions or concerns about the grading process, contact Miss Ward, Mrs Morgan or Mr Garrity.
- If you have questions about the enrichment/transition, contact Mrs Bowbanks (Year 11) or Mrs Allen (Year 13).
- If you have questions about evidence for a subject (after April 23<sup>rd</sup>) contact the Curriculum Leader for that subject.

Yours faithfully



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