QUEEN ELIZABETH'S GRAMMAR SCHOOL

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3rd December 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

Year 11 Exams Update

The mock examination session is nearly complete, and I hope your children have benefited from the experience. In this letter, we hope to answer some of the questions you may have at this time. You may also wish to read the letter to students, from Ofqual's Chief Regulator, Jo Saxton:
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/open-letters-arrangements-for-gcses-as-and-a-levels-in-2022/letter-to-students

Students will be getting mock papers returned to them in lessons over the next few weeks, and the most important questions at this time are:
- What can I do well?
- What do I need to do to improve?

Our main focus is on preparing students for the external exams.

What grade did my child get in their mocks?
Teachers may give an indication of a grade an answer may have been awarded, and answers will have been marked using exam board specific guidance, but grade boundaries are set by the exam boards (with supervision by Ofqual) at the end of the marking period. This means it is only once all the papers have been marked that the awarding body will set the boundaries. Although exam boards endeavour to set exam papers to the same level of difficulty each year, there will naturally be small variations in the level of challenge on the papers, and as a result, grade boundaries change each year to reflect the difficulty of the paper. This ensures that the standards are maintained from one year to the next and avoids grade inflation. In addition, exam boards have only awarded grades 9-1 for all subjects in 2018 and 2019.

In assessments, and in particular mock exams, we use practise questions from previous years, along with sample questions. Our aim is to provide students with exam questions they have not seen before so they are prepared for the summer exams. We can apply our best estimate of grade boundaries to past papers and parts of them, but they can only provide an indication of performance.

How have teachers given a predicted grade?
We use a range of evidence and our experience to offer a professional judgement of a current predicted grade; the grade we believe a student is most likely to achieve based on evidence so far. The compilation of a range of exam style answers produced across a student's studies to date informs this prediction. This is to help students understand where they are currently at to help them make plans for the future.
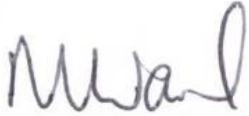
What about if exams are cancelled again?
Ofqual have asked schools to plan ahead so that assessments you undertake this year could be used as evidence. Any 'grades' that are awarded for mock exams and other assessments are not TAGS, and Ofqual have told us that:

"Teachers may tell the student the grade at which their performance in the assessment indicates they have performed. They should also be clear that the marking and grading have not been quality assured. Teachers must make it clear to their students that any grade used to indicate the level at which the student has performed is not a TAG. It will not be possible for a teacher to determine a TAG unless and until we set specific guidance on the determination of TAGs for 2022, which we will only do if exams are cancelled."

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In addition to these mock examinations, we are planning further opportunities to assess students to meet the guidance for TAGs. Again, our main priority is to prepare students to get the best result they can in the external examinations, and teachers will use a range of evidence for that purpose, from small quizzes, to more substantial assessments.

Please do get in touch if you have any questions, and if there any further ways that we can support you and/or your child.

Yours faithfully

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