

Student and Parent update on Grading 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

I am writing to update you on the arrangements being made to support our students and to ensure that grading in 2021 is fair and consistent. We are taking steps to ensure that the grades awarded reflect evidence of each “student’s knowledge, skills and abilities in relation to the subject content that they have been taught” and also that the Government’s intended outcome that grades in 2021 should be no easier or harder to achieve than in previous years.

The full guidance for Students and Parents from the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) can be found by following the link below. This letter is intended to summarise that guidance and highlight the key points for you.

[JCQ-Guidance-for-Students-and-Parents-on-Summer-2021.pdf](#)

Our staff in school are working with students to ensure each individual has a range of assessment evidence that will reflect their knowledge, skills and abilities in relation to the subject content they have been taught. These grades can only reflect the evidence staff have available to them and cannot incorporate any element of ‘prediction’.

Access arrangements can and will be applied for those students that require these adjustments to assessment. If they were not applied to prior assessment that forms part of the evidence staff are considering, then this will be noted and taken into account when the overall grading decision is made.

The use of evidence is flexible, so if a student has or does miss a specific assessment then alternative evidence can be considered providing it is a fair alternative to the missed assessment. As a result, ‘special considerations’ will not normally apply. Where a temporary illness, a temporary injury or some other event outside of the student’s control may have affected their performance in assessments which will be used to determine a grade, parents can request that this is taken into consideration. This will be very rare as the evidence considered is flexible and special considerations cannot be applied due to lost learning as stipulated by the JCQ guidance.

The final grade that teachers submit to exam boards will have gone through a process of checking and quality assurance, both internally within our school and with subject specialist colleagues from the [CMAT Trust](#) or other local secondary schools who use the same exam boards.

What we can and will share:

We will share the assessment evidence we intend to use for students in each subject with the pupils during lessons so that they can see their evidence file. We are currently collating the departmental information so that we can share an overview of the evidence each subject is using. This could vary significantly from subject to subject depending on the nature of the course; sequencing of the curriculum and assessment completed prior to lockdown. Some subjects who undertake significant elements of 'Non-Examined Assessment', or who have completed significant high-control external examinations already may be able to use a smaller number of assessment points, whereas others may need to draw on a wider range of smaller, in-class assessments. Our quality assurance process will ensure that there is equity between subjects with different styles of assessment.

Assessments that we draw upon to generate an overall grade, will either be High, Medium or Low stakes. High stakes assessments are those completed in school under exam conditions, Medium stake assessments are those completed in class but not under exam conditions such as topic tests, Low stakes assessment would refer to those assessments which are completed independently outside of school. All can form a part of the overall evidence considered however teachers must be certain that material contributing to final grades is authentic.

What we cannot share:

As stipulated by JCQ we cannot share the final grade we submit.

We will not be publishing grades of individual assessments as this can be misleading for students and parents because all pre-Covid external grade boundaries have been replaced with new guidance on grading from the exam boards. Numerical marks will be shared through the evidence files, and they may contribute to the final overall judgement which is made when all the evidence is drawn together.

Timeline for Students

This half-term, we have scheduled various condensed assessment opportunities for students to demonstrate appropriate evidence of their knowledge, skills and abilities.

These assessments are in lessons, they allow time for exam access arrangements and are spread across the half term. We are publishing the schedule of tests weekly in the Year 11 newsletter. Students are being briefed by teachers on when assessments will be and the kind of topics they might cover.

Year 11 pupils cease to be of compulsory school age on Friday 25th of June 2021; this represents no deviation from standard practice during a normal academic year and exam period.

All schools are required to submit Teacher Assessed Grades to the exam boards for Year 11 by Friday June 18th, it will take up to two weeks to upload the grades to exam boards as we have to do each grade individually.

Leaving dates

All Year 11 students will continue to receive their usual timetabled education provision in school up to and including Friday May 21st.

Students will be released from Monday 24th May provided that their coursework and portfolios of evidence in all subjects are complete.

It is anticipated that a small number of students may need to remain in school until 17th June.

Bridging Course

Abbey College are very pleased to offer all of the Year 11 students progressing into the Abbey College Sixth Form a three week bridging course from Monday June 7th to Friday 25th June. The current Year 11 have had two extended periods of time out of school and the Bridging Course gives the Year 11 students the opportunity to join the Sixth Form and the teachers the chance to close knowledge gaps and accelerate progress by starting the A level/BTEC courses early.

Results Days

Results will be released for Year 13 Students on Tuesday 10th August and for Year 11 students on Thursday 12th August. We hope that students can collect the result in person but we are awaiting government guidance.

Appeals

Appeals will take place throughout August to October. There are two stages of appeal:

Stage 1: centre review

If you don't think you have been issued with the correct grade, you can appeal to your school, who will review whether they:

- made an administrative error, e.g. they submitted an incorrect grade; they used an incorrect assessment mark when determining your grade.
- did not apply a procedure correctly, e.g. they did not follow their Centre Policy, did not undertake internal quality assurance, did not take account of access arrangements or mitigating circumstances, such as illness.

To help you decide whether to appeal, you can request that your school or college shares with you the following information on results day if not before:

- their Centre Policy, this will soon be available to read on the website.

- the sources of evidence used to determine your grade along with any grades/marks associated with them, this will be available to students in lessons and a summary will be on the website shortly.
- details of any special circumstances that have been taken into account in determining your grade, e.g. access arrangements, mitigating circumstances such as illness. Teachers are aware of the access arrangements. If you have knowledge of mitigating circumstances please communicate these to Mrs Glen before the Teacher Assessed Grades are finalised mid-May.

Stage 2: appeal to the exam board

If you still don't think you have the correct grade after the centre review is complete, you can ask your school to appeal to the exam board, who will review whether

- the school or college made an unreasonable exercise of academic judgement in the choice of evidence from which they determined your grade and/or in the determination of your grade from that evidence.
- the school or college did not apply a procedure correctly, e.g. they did not follow their Centre Policy, did not undertake internal quality assurance, did not take account of access arrangements or mitigating circumstances, such as illness.
- the exam board made an administrative error, e.g. they changed your grade during the processing of grades.

At both stages of the process you will need to submit your appeal to your school and give them your written consent to conduct the appeal or submit it to the exam board on your behalf. It's important to remember that **your grade can go down, up or stay the same** through either stage of the process.

Finally, if you believe the exam board has made a procedural error in handling your appeal, you can apply to Ofqual's Exam Procedures Review Service to review the process undertaken by the exam board.

The deadline for Appeals to the Centre is the 3rd September. The [JCQ guidance](#) includes a helpful timeline and more detail on appeals.

We recognise this is a concerning and difficult time for all of our students, their families and our staff. We are committed to doing everything we can to support one another and ensure all of our students receive grades that are fairly and consistently awarded.

Our staff are undertaking training this half term to standardise and quality assure their assessment, working with colleagues from across the CMAT trust and exam boards. The grades students receive will be a holistic judgement based on the assessment evidence available to teachers and reviewed against the published grade descriptors.

We are confident that our staff will make fair and reasoned judgements working with their colleagues within the school and across the trust. It is important that they are given the time and space to do this. Any communication or interaction that could be construed as trying to influence staff in the awarding of grades will have to be reported to the exam boards and could impact on the final grade awarded, so we would encourage parents to consider any requests carefully. For our students, it is crucial that we remain positive and ensure they can demonstrate fully their capabilities.

Whilst lock down has been challenging for all of us we remain incredibly proud of the hard work and commitment demonstrated by our students and remain confident that this will be reflected in their grades this summer. Should you have any concerns or questions about the process please do not hesitate to get in touch with myself or Mrs Glen.

Yours faithfully



Dr Oswell
Acting Assistant Head Teacher responsible for Assessment, Reporting and Recording