



April 2020

Dear Parent/Carer and Student

Exam Grades – Reminders and answers to key questions

As you are aware, all students in schools and colleges who were due to take GCSE and A level public examinations this summer are to be awarded a grade by the exam boards based on an assessment of the grade they would have been *'most likely to achieve'* had the exams gone ahead.

We know that, following the cancellation of exams, you may be concerned about how your GCSE or GCE grades will be arrived at - and will probably have lots of questions about the process.

We would like to reassure you that this process will be carried out in a thorough and robust way to ensure that it is fair and as accurate as possible. The information below captures key information to help you understand what happens next, and what your teachers - and the school, can and cannot do.

What evidence will be used to arrive at a centre assessed grade?

We will follow the Ofqual guidance which was communicated to parents and students before Easter and which can be accessed via the link [here](#).

The grades we submit to the exam board must reflect a fair, reasonable and carefully considered judgement of the 'most likely grade' a student would have achieved if they had sat their exams this summer and completed any non-examined assessment.

This means we will take into account the full range of evidence we have as a school about each student. This will include:

- non examined assessments - whether completed or not
- trial examinations
- classwork
- homework

In short, we will use a range of different assessment information gathered over the whole course of study to establish progress towards the 'most likely grade'

How important are the trial exams?

Trial examinations are a mechanism for schools and students to see how well they know and understand their subject and where there are gaps that need to be addressed before the real exam series. They are not a direct reflection of what we expect students to achieve: some students may not have done as well as they had hoped, for a range of reasons, or missed an exam. Please do not worry. Teachers will know which students under-achieved in the trial exams and we expect students to improve between the mock examinations and the real exams. We will not base our submissions on a single assessment point as this would not be a fair representation of what our students can do.

Will you factor in progress and improved work ethic?

We appreciate most students begin to work harder in the run up to exams and any school-based evidence of this recent progress will inform our judgements. We will take into account that students were last with us in March and the exams were not due to start until May; we have vast experience to track the usual trajectory of students as they prepare for their exams. We cannot, however, accept information from parents (or private tutors) about improved attitude/focus and how they think this might have improved the expected outcome.

Access arrangements have been agreed since the trial exams – how might this be considered?

We will ensure that all teachers are reminded and updated of any access arrangements so that this is taken into consideration.

If performance has been adversely affected by significant health issues/other extenuating circumstances this year, will this be taken into account?

Yes. We will ensure all teachers are made aware of cases of significant health issues/other extenuating circumstances for which we have documented evidence so that this is taken into consideration.

Can work or grades be discussed with teachers/the school?

No. We appreciate that you may also feel you want to discuss your work and progress with your teachers. However, we understand that the exam boards may interpret any such discussions as an attempt to influence the grading and, therefore, we are now asking that you do not enter into any communication with the school about your grades or work completed. For this reason, we will be unable to answer any questions or queries which have already been submitted.

Can I see the grades submitted to the exam board?

No. Ofqual is clear that this would compromise the process.

The guidance goes further and reminds schools, parents and students that disclosure of this 'data' is 'exempt from disclosure' under paragraph 25 (2) of the Data Protection Act.

Will the grades awarded by the boards be the same grades as the school submits to them?

Not necessarily. The centre-assessed grades Ashlyns will submit will only form part of the grading process. Exam boards will apply a statistical model to standardise grades from all schools to ensure fairness and consistency and to maintain standards across examination series.

Should Year 11/13 work still be completed or are there any extra tasks that could be undertaken to 'secure' grades?

The guidance is clear that "no student should be disadvantaged if they are unable to complete any work set after schools were closed". Consequently we cannot advantage students by giving them additional tasks, nor can we consider any work completed after 20 March.

However, if students think they may want to sit an exam in the future, which has an NEA component, there is nothing to stop them working on this independently. We will not be able to consider this in the grading process though.

We have consistently encouraged students in Years 11 and 13 to continue to engage with their teachers and the tasks being set, especially in the case of subjects that still had content that required completion. This is as much to encourage a sense of purpose and normality as anything else. Keeping a routine is good for us all and helps students maintain a work ethic, which will support their next steps.

When will the results be published?

Results will be published in the summer as planned. Year 13 students will receive their results on Thursday 13 August while Year 11 will receive their results on Thursday 20 August.

What will happen if we are unhappy with the grades?

Under the circumstances, it is expected that the normal arrangements for reviews of marking and appeals will not apply. There may be an appeals process if the school feels the exam board has made errors in the statistical model applied to their submission but this has not yet been confirmed.

There are plans for an autumn examination series for students who feel that their grades from the summer do not reflect their ability.

Is the whole process finalised now?

No. Ofqual has issued a consultation on key mechanisms and proposals and has invited responses from schools, teachers, parents and students. This can be accessed [here](#).

We trust you will recognise that we are operating within a fast-moving and highly dynamic situation, with new information arriving regularly. As and when we receive new information, we will share this with you.

In the meantime, please be reassured that staff at Ashlyns are working to ensure this process is robust, fair and reflects our students' achievements.

Yours sincerely



Mrs R Martin
Assistant Headteacher