

GCSE Exams Summer 2021

Frequently Asked Questions for Students

What's happening? What grade will I get?

The grades in 2021 are not going to be awarded using examinations. We know that they will be based on teacher assessment, but it is our understanding that an algorithm will not be used to re-assess these by the government, as this was the cause of so much difficulty last year.

We have also been informed that there will be some form of moderation and checking to ensure that grades are not too high or too low.

The Department for Education are consulting with Ofqual (the exams regulator) to determine what this process will look like. I will share this information with you as soon as I know more.

Which work will be used to determine my grade?

That is not a question I can answer at the moment because the consultation has not started.

My advice is that you continue to work as if examinations were going ahead. If we are required to share estimated grades with the exam boards then you need to put yourself in the best possible position by continuing to work as hard as you can for the remaining time in Year 11.

This is the best advice I can offer Year 11 students at this point.

This isn't fair – I have worked so hard!

It is disappointing that examinations will not be taking place, but I am confident that the teacher assessed grades will be a fair reflection of pupils' grades. To reassure you, the overall level of grades pupils achieved last year (based on Centre Assessed Grades) was a very accurate reflection of those pupils' likely performance had they sat the exams. Hard work will still lead to you achieving the highest grades you are capable of – your grade is still very much up to you!

What's happening with mock examinations?

I haven't decided yet! Clearly, this will depend on the evolving situation with the pandemic – putting 160 young adults in a confined space for 2 hours at a time is unlikely for the foreseeable future certainly. We will continue to assess Year 11 work during this lockdown and in class when Year 11 return, before I make any decision on whether to run any whole cohort exams.

I don't get on with one of my teachers – how might this unfairly affect my grade.

This was not our experience from last year because of the way the process worked. Although individual staff provided information, the grades went through a series of checks and balances (anonymously) before being agreed as accurate and signed off officially by the Principal. There are, inevitably, occasional clashes of personality within our school community but the professionalism of our staff, and the process itself, will prevent this from having an impact.

What's the point in continuing working when there are no exams?

Until the completion of the consultation between Ofqual and DfE, we do not know what information will be required of us. Being able to share strong grades that you have achieved in school will be the best scenario. I understand that it may be difficult for you to continue to be motivated to work, but it is absolutely vital that you do so in order to give yourself the best chance. If you want to go on to Post-16 education it is not sensible for you to simply miss a number of weeks of education – you need the curriculum knowledge for further study. We will be checking in with you during this lockdown to make sure you are managing to keep going!!

Will I be able to appeal the grade I am given by Teacher Assessment?

Good question! We don't know currently, and it will be part of the consultation that begins tomorrow.