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Wednesday 22nd April 2020

Dear Parent/Guardian,
Assalaamu Alaikum,
I pray this finds you in the best of health and Imaan

RE: GCSE Update

As you are aware, on the 18th March 2020, the Secretary of State for Education announced that the summer 2020 GCSE, AS and A level exam series would be cancelled in order to help fight the spread of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) and that students due to sit the exams would be awarded a grade based on an assessment of the grade they would have been most likely to achieve had exams gone ahead.

On the 23rd March, in a written statement to Parliament, the Secretary of State explained the government's intention that results would be issued to this year's cohort based on a range of evidence and data, including performance on mock exams and non-exam assessment.

Most recently, at the beginning of April 2020, Ofqual released information on how grading will work for students in Years 11 to 13 who would have taken examinations this summer.

How will it work?

Schools and colleges are to use their professional experience to make fair and objective judgments of the grade they believe a student would have achieved had they sat their exams this year. It is important that schools and colleges take into account the full range of available evidence when they grade students - including non-exam assessment; the results of any homework assignments or mock exams; and any other records of student performance over the course of study.

Please find below further information to frequently asked questions:

1. Did exams need to be cancelled?

From Friday 20 March, all educational settings are closed to everyone except the children of critical workers and vulnerable children.

The coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak is expected to continue having a significant impact on the education system, and the country, for months to come. Therefore, exams have been cancelled now to give pupils, parents, and teacher's certainty, and enable schools and colleges to focus on supporting vulnerable children and the children of key workers.

2. What will happen to those who have already done some non-exam assessment?

Students who were due to sit A level, AS level or GCSE exams this summer will receive a calculated grade. The calculated grade process will take into account a range of evidence including, for example, non-exam assessment and mock results, and the approach will be standardised between schools and colleges. There's separate guidance from Ofqual on [awarding GCSE, AS and A levels](#) which includes the implications for non-exam assessment.

3. How will you address the fact that students from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to have their grades under-predicted?

This summer's calculated grades are not predicted grades. Ofqual, the independent qualifications regulator, is developing a fair and robust process that takes into account a broad range of evidence, including assessments by schools and colleges of the grades that students would have been likely to obtain if exams went ahead and their prior attainment. Ofqual will make every effort to ensure that the process does not disadvantage any particular group of students. Ofqual is consulting (from 15 to 29 April) on what it will be doing to make this process as fair as possible: [Exceptional arrangements for exam grading and assessment in 2020](#).

Pupils who do not feel their calculated grade reflects their ability will have the opportunity to sit an exam as soon as is reasonably possible after schools and colleges open again.

4. Will all students get their predicted grade?

No. We know that simply using predicted grades would not be fair to all students. The 'centre assessment grade' which the exam boards will ask schools and colleges to submit for A and AS levels and GCSEs will take into account an assessment of the likely grade that students would have obtained had exams gone ahead, and these will be standardised across schools and colleges. For this reason, students' final calculated grades will not necessarily reflect their predicted grades.

5. Will schools be using mock exam results as a barometer for results – and is this fair on students as they did not know at the time these would be used as their final mark?

Mock exam results will be one of the pieces of evidence that will be taken into account in this process, alongside other factors. There's separate guidance from Ofqual on [awarding GCSE, AS and A levels](#) which explains to schools and colleges how to do this fairly and robustly.

6. Will the past performance of the school be taken into account when devising the calculated grade?

Ofqual's guidance says that one of the sources of evidence schools and colleges should draw on is the performance of this year's students compared to those in previous years. However, this is only one of the sources of evidence that will be taken into account. Ofqual's consultation [Exceptional arrangements for exam grading and assessment in 2020](#), which runs from 15 to 29 April, includes proposals for how the standardisation process at national level should take the past performance of schools and colleges into account.

7. Is this an entirely new system?

This is a new system, but one which builds on existing practices, as education professionals are used to making holistic judgements about their students. These judgements will be standardised at national level to give grades that are as fair as possible.

8. When will I get my results?

A and AS level results will be published on 13 August and **GCSE results on 20 August**, as originally planned. This will enable progression to higher and further education to take place in the normal way.

Results days for other qualifications are set by individual exam boards. If you are taking such qualifications you should check the planned results day with your school or college.

9. Will universities, colleges and sixth forms accept these grades?

The calculated grades awarded this summer will be formal grades, with the same status as grades awarded in any other year. They will therefore be accepted by all institutions.

University representatives have already confirmed that they expect universities to do all they can to support students and ensure they can progress to higher education.

10. What if I am unhappy with my calculated grade?

Ofqual and the exam boards are working to ensure that candidates are awarded a fair grade that recognises the work they have put in. If an A level, AS level or GCSE student does not believe the correct process has been followed in their case they will be able to appeal on that basis. Ofqual is [consulting on the arrangements for these appeals](#). In addition, if a student does not feel their grade reflects their performance, they will have the opportunity to sit an exam, as soon as is reasonably possible after schools and colleges open again. Students will also have the option to sit their exams in summer 2021, in line with usual practice.

11. What about private candidates or home educated students?

Where schools and colleges have accepted entries from external candidates (students who they have not taught themselves, because they have been home-schooled, following distance-learning programmes or studying independently), those students should be taken account of in the process of producing centre assessment grades, where the head teacher or principal is confident that they and their staff have seen sufficient evidence of the student's achievement to make an objective judgement.

Ofqual is also exploring urgently whether there are options for those students who do not have an existing relationship with an exams centre and who need results this summer for progression purposes. Unfortunately, this is unlikely to be possible for all external candidates, some of whom may instead need to take exams in the autumn to get their grades. More details are available in the consultation document [Exceptional arrangements for exam grading and assessment in 2020](#).

Ofqual has asked organisations that represent higher and further education providers to consider the steps that providers could take when making admissions decisions this summer for any private candidates who do not receive a grade. They have said that they believe that institutions will consider a range of other evidence and information for these students to allow them to progress wherever possible.

12. Can private centres run GCSEs or A levels if they chose to do so?

No. Exam boards will not be issuing papers for this summer's GCSE, AS and A levels so there will not be the opportunity to sit them at any centre.

13. Does this mean every exam in every module in every subject being cancelled, or will a limited number go ahead at GCSE and/or A level?

Exam boards will not be issuing papers for this summer's GCSE, AS and A levels so there will not be the opportunity to sit them in any subject.

14. What about vocational and technical qualifications?

We recognise that many students will be taking vocational or technical qualifications and our priority is to ensure that students and adult learners taking these qualifications can move on as planned to the next stage of their lives, including starting university, college or sixth form courses, apprenticeships in the autumn, getting a job or progressing in work.

In order to achieve this, the Department for Education [has published a letter to Ofqual setting out the approach that should be taken](#) and Ofqual [has published further information on their approach](#). As far as possible qualifications used for progression to higher and further education will be treated in a similar way to GCSEs, AS and A levels, with students receiving a calculated result.

However, the complexity of the vocational and technical qualifications landscape means that a single approach is not appropriate. Some qualifications are primarily designed to support progression to or through employment. Ofqual is working with awarding organisations to identify those qualifications where it might be appropriate to generate a calculated grade, or where it would be more valid to adapt assessments so that they can still take place even though centres have ceased classroom delivery.

Ofqual will continue to work closely with awarding organisations, the Department for Education and the wider sector to set out as soon as possible after Easter further details of the approach.

15. Will students be required to do further work to contribute towards their grade?

There is no requirement for schools and colleges to set additional mock exams or homework tasks for the purposes of determining a centre assessment grade, and no student should be disadvantaged if they are unable to complete any work set after schools were closed. Where additional work has been completed after schools and colleges were closed on 20 March, Ofqual is advising head teachers and principals to exercise caution where that evidence suggests a change in performance. In many cases this is likely to reflect the circumstances and context in which the work is done.

16. Can schools and colleges take incomplete coursework into account?

Ofqual's guidance on [awarding GCSE, AS and A levels](#) makes clear that schools and colleges do not need to ask students to complete any unfinished non-exam assessment work for the purposes of grading. Where they do choose to take into account coursework completed after 20 March, Ofqual is advising head teachers and principals to exercise caution where that evidence suggests a change in performance. In many cases this is likely to reflect the circumstances and context in which the work is done.

17. What will young people with university offers do?

The grades awarded this summer will be formal grades, with the same status as grades awarded in any other year. There is no reason for the usual admissions cycle to be disrupted.

University representatives have already confirmed that they expect universities to do all they can to support students and ensure they can progress to higher education

18. Do universities need to start making unconditional offers / should I accept an unconditional offer now that exams are cancelled?

Universities should not begin making new unconditional offers and applicants should feel no pressure to accept such offers, as they will be awarded a formal calculated grade for each exam they would have taken.

19. If I already have an unconditional offer, does that remain?

Yes. An unconditional offer means you have already met the entry requirements, so the place is yours if you want it.

20. If I take the exam option, will I still be able to go to university this year?

Students who do not feel their calculated grade reflects their performance will have the opportunity to sit an exam as soon as is reasonably possible after the beginning of the new academic year.

Our aim is for results to be awarded before Christmas, and Ofqual is working with exam boards to work out how this could be delivered. Universities representatives have assured us that universities will be as flexible as possible in their admissions.

Any student wanting to understand the implications on university admission of taking these autumn exams should speak to the university from which they have an offer after receiving their calculated grade in the summer.

21. Are iGCSEs and the International Baccalaureate also cancelled?

Yes. Summer exams for both international GCSEs and the International Baccalaureate have been cancelled in all countries this year. The awarding organisations that provide international GCSEs have published information about the arrangements they are putting in place for this year¹ which reflect those being made for the qualifications covered by [Ofqual's consultation](#).

22. How will colleges, sixth forms and universities cope with the fact that these students will have missed out on some of their education?

These are extraordinary circumstances. We are working with schools, sixth forms, colleges and universities to ensure that we do everything we can to best help students prepare for and progress to the next stage of their education.

23. Might the exams be reinstated if the coronavirus (COVID-19) is not as bad as expected?

No. The decision has been taken to cancel all exams this summer.

Please rest assured that all subject teachers and the SLT will be spending the next few weeks working diligently to ensure all judgments are as accurate as possible. In line with Ofqual guidance we will ensure that a range of evidence is used and thoroughly reviewed for each and every one of our Year 11 students before deciding on a final conclusive grade. In order for Teachers to focus on starting the process of awarding teacher assessed grades, teachers will not be setting any work for Year 11 students after Friday 1st May.

Please note, further information regarding Ofqual's guidance can be accessed via the links below;

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcses-as-and-a-level-awarding-summer-2020>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/further-details-on-exams-and-grades-announced>

Sincerely,
S. Member
Mrs Member
Head Teacher



Charity Reg No: 273219

