

JMA/KWE

4<sup>th</sup> March 2021

Dear Year 11 Students and Families

**Re: GCSE Assessments and Grading**

I hope that you are all keeping safe and well. I understand that some of you may be feeling anxious about this summer's exam grading and, with this letter, I hope to be able to provide you with a bit more certainty and reassurance about the weeks and months to come.

As you will no doubt be aware, the Government released plans last week for the awarding of GCSE grades – you can find a link to the document at the end of this letter. We are still awaiting further guidance from individual exam boards but we are in a position to be able to share with you what we do know about how grades will be determined for students and our timeline.

As communicated to you previously, instead of external GCSE examinations this summer, students will be assessed by their teachers using a range of evidence:

- Class-based assessments completed through Key Stage 4
- The mock examinations which took place prior to Christmas
- External units or exam marks which have already been awarded
- Any further assessments to be completed between now and May half term, including exams which will take place in April/May

This evidence will be subject to a rigorous moderation process – both internally and externally.

Timeline

To allow students to prepare for the demands of their final few months at school, we have agreed upon a timeline which we are now in a position to share with you:

8 <sup>th</sup> March	All students return to school
8 <sup>th</sup> March – 1 <sup>st</sup> April	Year 11 students in lessons preparing for the formal exam period after Easter There may be some informal class-based assessments during this time
<b>Easter Holidays</b>	
19 <sup>th</sup> April	Students return to school
26 <sup>th</sup> April – 7 <sup>th</sup> May	Formal examination period
10 <sup>th</sup> May – 28 <sup>th</sup> May	Teachers mark and moderate exams Year 11 students receive further teaching and intervention in lessons Calculation of final grades
<b>Half Term</b>	
7 <sup>th</sup> – 16 <sup>th</sup> June	Internal moderation and quality assurance process
18 <sup>th</sup> June	Deadline for submission of centre-assessed grades to exam boards
June and July	External moderation and quality assurance process conducted by exam boards
12 <sup>th</sup> August	GCSE results released to students

We are waiting to hear from the DfE about when Year 11 students will officially leave school; when we have this date, we will let you know.

### Class-Based Assessments and Exams

The wellbeing and mental health of our students is of paramount importance to us and we want to make sure that our students do not feel overwhelmed over the next few months. I want to stress to students that any class-based assessments which are taken before Easter are not something for students to feel worried or anxious about; on the contrary they are an opportunity to either demonstrate further progress (which can be used as evidence for a higher grade) or to allow their teachers to identify any gaps in their learning (which will allow teachers to work with students to address these).

After the Easter holidays you will see that we have built in a series of examinations which will take place over approximately a two-week period. This will run in a different way to a series of externally-set GCSE exams as students will not be expected to sit every paper for every subject. From next week, teachers will be telling students exactly which papers and topics will be assessed; we will formalise this in an exam timetable which we will send to you as soon as it is finalised. As mentioned previously, these exam results will not be the only source of evidence used to calculate final grades but they will provide key evidence of the grades which students are working at. It is important that students take these exams as seriously as they would if they were the externally-set GCSE exams. Once this examination series is over, students will continue to attend their lessons as usual so that we can ensure we have enough evidence to award their grades. This is also an opportunity for teachers to deliver any content not yet taught and to prepare students for post-16 study.

### Quality Assurance

Once all assessments have taken place, the school will use all the evidence available to calculate students' centre-assessed grades. These grades will be subject to a thorough and rigorous moderation process to ensure that the grades are evidence-based, honest and fair. Final centre-assessed grades need to be submitted by 18<sup>th</sup> June; from this point, exam boards will choose a sample of schools and departments and request to see the evidence which has been used to determine grades to ensure that appropriate procedures have been followed.

### Appeals

If a student feels that the grades they receive in August have been unfairly awarded, there is an appeals process which can be followed. There are two stages to this:

**Stage 1:** The student can ask the school to check whether an administrative or procedural error has been made. If an error has been made, we can appeal to the exam board for the grade to be changed.

**Stage 2:** If the school confirms that there has been no error in the submission of centre-assessed grades, the student can ask us to appeal to the exam boards on their behalf. We will submit a student's appeal to the exam boards and provide all the evidence on which the judgement has been made. The exam board will then decide whether the grade reflects an appropriate exercise of academic judgement. Exam boards will only revise a student's grade if the board finds that the evidence on which the grade was determined cannot reasonably support that grade, rather than as a result of marginal differences of opinion.



Below are some links to some further reading which may be of use:

Guidance from Ofqual:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/965005/6747-1\\_decisions\\_-\\_GQ\\_consultation\\_on\\_awarding\\_grades\\_in\\_2021.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/965005/6747-1_decisions_-_GQ_consultation_on_awarding_grades_in_2021.pdf)

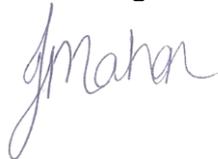
Guidance from the DfE for students:

[https://dfemedia.blog.gov.uk/2021/02/25/what-you-need-to-know-about-grades-in-2021/?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=govdelivery](https://dfemedia.blog.gov.uk/2021/02/25/what-you-need-to-know-about-grades-in-2021/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery)

Students, we fully understand that this is a very difficult and worrying time for you. In the midst of a global pandemic, you are having to navigate the pressures and worries which accompany a national lockdown, whilst also being faced with the pressures of assessments and examinations which will shape the course of your future. You can be assured that we will do everything in our power to delicately balance the requirement to conduct assessments whilst also looking after your mental health and wellbeing so that you are able to enjoy your final few months at Burton Borough School. We will make sure that you are fully prepared for your assessments and exams over the next few months and that your papers are marked and moderated so that your final grades are the result of a rigorous but fair process – one which is conducted with integrity and will stand up to scrutiny should we be asked by the exam boards to explain our process.

I realise that there is a lot of information to take in so if you have any concerns or questions about any of this, please feel free to contact me or your child's small school.

With kind regards



Mrs Jude Mahon  
Head of Hawkstone /  
Responsibility for Standards & Progress



FRAMEWORK FOR  
ETHICAL LEADERSHIP  
IN EDUCATION  
PATHFINDER

