

Ref: NTR/ALA/Yr11GCSEGrading

15 March 2021

Dear Parents/Carers,

**Re: Year 11 – Grading of GCSEs and other Qualifications in summer 2021**

Following on from the short video you received regarding how GCSE grades will be rewarded this Summer over the Lockdown period, we have now received further details which we would like to share with you.

These details have already been shared with students in an assembly on their first day back in school on 8th March.

**How will grades be awarded this summer?**

Grades for GCSEs and other qualifications will be based on a process involving centre assessment against national standards, internal quality assurance, and external quality assurance by the exam boards.

The national process defined by the Department for Education and the exams' regulator, Ofqual is as follows:

1. Teachers will assess students against a national standard, which will be defined by the exam boards before the Easter break.
2. Departments will submit grades which will be quality assured by the school. This internal quality assurance process will have to be signed off by the exam board to ensure it is rigorous and in line with national standards.
3. Our school results will be quality assured externally by the exam boards, which may include random sampling of our school's evidence.
4. If the exam boards are confident in our submitted results, then the exam boards will award students their final grades.
5. If students do not think their results are accurate, they will have the right to appeal.

**So, do teachers award the grade?**

Simply: no. The grade students achieve will start with their teacher's assessment of their performance across a range of evidence. **Students will be provided with weekly class-based assessment tasks starting from the week beginning 15 March.** This will vary from subject to subject. Once finalised, details of these assessments will be given to students and parents. **More formal assessments for each subject will take place in the exam hall in the week beginning 3 May and will run until 14 May.** These assessments will be judged against a nationally-defined standard, not the teacher's own opinion. Assessments are then subject to both internal and external quality assurance before the final grade is awarded by the exam body as usual.

### **Does this mean grades are decided by an algorithm?**

No, unlike last year, students' grades will not be changed by a formula. The internal and external quality assurance measures will all be done by humans, not an algorithm. There is no limit on the achievement of students, providing they have evidence that they are working at that grade.

### **What about loss of learning / impact of Covid?**

This year, teachers will only assess students on content they have been taught – because of the continued disruption of the pandemic. This means students will not be disadvantaged if they individually, their whole class or whole year group have been unable to complete their full course. However, grades can only be submitted on the basis of the evidence we have of student's performance, even if that evidence covers less of the course than usual. Students who would usually have extra time in the exams will benefit from the same arrangements in teacher assessment.

### **Will grades be different between different schools and colleges?**

No, the standard against which teachers will be assessing students is set nationally by the exam boards. This is the standard that will be used during external quality assurance and appeals to ensure consistency and fairness across the system.

### **What evidence will be used?**

Teachers are able to draw on a range of assessment evidence from across a student's study of the course, up until 28 May As stated above, class based assessment, PPE exams from November and papers set by the exam boards will be used. The exam boards are producing assessment materials that will be sent to us before Easter. Different departments may use different sources of evidence, and there is no requirement for any one type of assessment to be used – it's about a performance across a range of evidence.

### **The exam boards are only giving out past papers, how is this fair?**

Most of the assessments provided by the exam boards will be drawn from past papers, although there will be new questions as well. There is significant research that even if students have seen assessments questions before, it does not reduce the validity of the assessment. Furthermore, exam board questions are only one of the many pieces of evidence we will use to assess students this summer.

### **Can students and parents make the case for why a student should get a higher grade?**

Our teachers are already using their professional expertise to assess students on the content they have been taught. Teachers are unable to submit higher grades for students unless they have the evidence that they are consistently working at this level. If teachers submit higher grades without evidence, they are committing exam malpractice.



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In 2020, any undue pressure by student or parent who placed undue pressure on teachers to increase grades was also considered exam malpractice. It is likely to be the same for 2021. If students or parents are found to be putting teachers or leaders under undue pressure to increase grades, then this matter will be referred to the exam boards and an investigation into malpractice may ensue. This may result in the student's certificate being removed entirely if malpractice is deemed to have taken place.

### **Can students discuss their grades with teachers?**

Teachers will be able to discuss which evidence they are using to inform their judgement with students, including marked work.

However, staff are not allowed to disclose their final submitted grade we give to the exam board. Students should not attempt to second-guess the grade submitted, as teachers will be using a range of evidence to inform their final judgement. Students must not pressure teachers to reveal the grades they are submitting, or to increase the grades, as doing so may be considered exam malpractice.

### **What should students do to improve their grades?**

The best thing students can do is to continue to attend classes, work hard, act on feedback from their teachers, revise, and read around their subject. Their grade will be based on their performance, and so their outcomes are ultimately in their hands.

We understand that this is a hugely important time for students in Year 11 and, as a school, we are doing everything we can to support them in the time they have left with us. If you have any questions regarding the process outlined above, please complete the form below.

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=WnSRoNi3ek2yphNZBT1FELBInbmmo0REnElgHaZADwhUQ1VCRIBXTIQ0TUlyUjBMUVE3NVBTUFpONy4u>

We are planning to hold an online information evening on Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> March from 4.30pm until 5.30pm where we plan to answer as many questions sent in as we can. Further details as to how to access this event will be sent closer to the date.

### **Key Contacts**

**Mrs N Treacy, Deputy Principal – [NTreacy@cityofpeterboroughacademy.org](mailto:NTreacy@cityofpeterboroughacademy.org)**

**Mr R Paul (Head of Year 11) – [RPaul@cityofpeterboroughacademy.org](mailto:RPaul@cityofpeterboroughacademy.org)**

Kind regards,



Nicola Treacy  
Deputy Principal (Standards)



Rob Paul  
Head of Year 11



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