



3 April 2020

Dear Parents and Carers and Year 11 students

We have today received detailed guidance from Ofqual (the exams regulator) and the Department for Education today regarding the process that schools and colleges must follow following the decision to cancel the summer GCSE exam season this year.

We know that our students and their parents have been waiting anxiously for news about what the process might look like but wanted to wait until we received this guidance before we wrote to you. We do hope that you and your families are keeping well and that this letter will answer some of the questions that you will undoubtedly have.

We will of course write to you again as further updates to the guidance are announced.

The following are answers to what we expect to be Frequently Asked Questions.

How will grades be calculated?

We will be asked to send exam boards two pieces of information for each of your subjects, based on what we know about your work and achievements:

- the grade we believe you were most likely to get if teaching, learning and exams had happened as planned
- within each subject, and within each grade, a rank order of students at school (for example, if as a centre we believed that 15 students were to achieve a GCSE Grade 5 in Drama, the school will be asked to rank order these 15 students (where 1 is the most secure Grade 5 and 15 is the least secure Grade 5).

This information will be used to standardise judgements – allowing fine tuning of the standard applied across schools and colleges. We will consider a range of things like your classwork and homework; your results in assignments and any mock exams; any non-exam assessment or coursework you might have done; and your general progress during your course.

This information will allow Ofqual and exam boards, to standardise grades across schools and colleges, to make sure that, as far as possible, results are fair and that students are not advantaged or disadvantaged because their schools or colleges are more generous or harsh than others when making those judgements. That means the final grade you get could be different from the one your school or college sends to the exam board.

Do I need to complete any new work for my school/college to submit a grade?

We are not required to set additional mock exams or homework in order to submit your centre assessment grade, and you won't be disadvantaged if you were not set, or were unable to complete, any work given out after schools were closed.

Can I see the grades my school/college submits for me?

No, this information will be confidential. Please don't ask your teachers, or anyone else at your school or college, to tell you the grades they will be sending to the exam boards or where they have placed you in the order of students; they will not be allowed to share this with you.

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I am a private candidate – what does this mean for me?

If you are a private candidate (for example, home-schooled, following distance-learning programmes or studying independently) the centre you are entering with should include you where the head teacher or principal is confident that they and their staff have seen sufficient evidence of your achievement to make an objective judgement. We are urgently exploring whether there are alternative options for those students who do not have an existing relationship with a centre and who need results this summer to progress. Unfortunately this is unlikely to be possible for all private candidates, some of whom may instead need to take exams in the autumn to get their grades. We appreciate that this is a matter of real concern to private candidates and will provide an update as soon as possible. We have asked organisations that represent universities and FE colleges 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 told us that they believe that institutions will consider a range of other evidence and information for these students to allow them to progress wherever possible.

When will I get my results?

We're working hard to get results out as soon as possible – results won't be delayed after the dates they were expected in August, and ideally they will be issued a little earlier, so you can have the certainty you need.

Can I take my exams another time?

Ofqual will be working with exam boards to offer additional exams in the autumn term as soon as it is possible to do so. We'll let you know about these in the coming weeks. The information Ofqual has published covers GCSEs, AS and A levels, plus Extended Project Qualifications and Additional Extension Awards in maths. You can find out more about which qualifications and students are included, and the current arrangements for those which are not, in the detailed guidance; along with answers to other questions that you and your parents or carers might have. We will keep updating our guidance as new information becomes available, including to share details about vocational and technical qualifications as soon as we can, so please keep an eye on our website. Please be reassured that the grades you get this summer will look exactly the same as in previous years, and they will have equal status with universities, colleges and employers, to help you move forward in your lives as planned.

As a school, we will now be working in response to the guidance issued by Ofqual today to ensure that all of our students are graded fairly for the hard work they have invested in their GCSE and A Level studies.

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We reiterate that:

“Schools and colleges have been told that they must not share their centre assessment grades with students, parents or carers, under any circumstances, until after final results are issued. This is to protect the integrity of centres’ judgements, and to avoid anyone feeling under pressure to submit a grade that is not supported by the evidence. Since the final grades for some or all students in a centre could be different from those submitted, it also helps to manage students’ expectations.”

As a result of this, our staff are now **prohibited from having any discussions regarding the awarding of grades for individual students** with parents, or with the students themselves so please refrain from emailing staff with questions relating to centre predicted grades.

Supporting Your Child’s Mental Health

We are aware that this is a difficult time for families. We would like to sign post you to some support available online.

Mental health is just as important as physical health. Support can be found using the following links, [Mind](#) and [BBC](#). Advice for talking to your child about the Virus can be found on [Child mind](#)

If You Are Concerned About The Safety or Welfare of a Child During Closure

If you feel that a child is at urgent risk of harm please contact the First Response Team on 0117 903 6444 during office hours, the Emergency Duty Team on 01454 615165 at all other times, or the police on 999 if the child is at immediate risk.

You can report any information to us during closure using the email address safeguarding@cotham.bristol.sch.uk. Our dedicated safeguarding team will continue to monitor this during closure.

Thank you again for your patience and support at this challenging time.

Wishing you and your families the best of health.

Yours faithfully

Mr Christopher Reed
Deputy Headteacher

