

Thursday 11th March 2021

H A M M E R S M I T H

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EXAMINATIONS UPDATE

Dear Year 11 and Sixth Form Students and Parent/Carers,

Congratulations to all of our students on their efforts and commitment to their studies shown over the latest period of remote teaching and learning. Students have now returned to school and we are so pleased to have them all back. I am sure they are all glad to be back in the academy building, see friends and be able to engage with their teachers in actual (rather than remote) lessons once more.

I am writing to update you all on the latest developments regarding the awarding of grades this summer.

I realise this has been and remains an anxious time for students as they await further information. We are acting as quickly as possible on the (still limited) details we have received from Ofqual and the Department for Education (DfE). Even as I write, we await more information and detail from our Exam Boards as to how they wish us to proceed based on the latest Ofqual and DfE advice. So there will be more to follow to students and parents.

We have been informed by Ofqual that in order to award A-Level, BTEC and GCSE grades this summer, we are required to **generate a grade for each subject per student based on a range of evidence that demonstrates a student's performance** on the material they have been taught.

Teaching departments now need to make some swift but considered judgements on the levels at which students are performing in order to determine the grades to award this summer. It is clear that grades must be based on evidence, which is subject to inspection by the Boards. Until we know more about their exact assessment requirements, the Academy believes that it is sensible to create a range of assessment opportunities over the coming months to support departments in making their decisions, and to ensure that students have a number of opportunities to demonstrate their learning and ability.

To this end I am writing, as promised, to give you all notice of upcoming assessments, and a little more about the nature of these assessments. A timeline will be communicated within the next 10 days. There will be further details to follow from individual teaching departments for each subject regarding content and the nature of each subject assessment. I will also publish in due course some more details about how individual subjects will calculate their grades this summer. This is likely to vary from subject to subject though we will be agreeing on some general principles; much will depend on



the details we are likely to receive in the coming days from the Exam Boards and the range of evidence they specify for us to use.

Upon returning in the week beginning 8th March, there will be no significant assessments for students in at least the first three weeks (normal end of topic tests etc. that would routinely be part of teaching may take place). Teachers will not be doing any new teaching. They will work with students to complete any teaching they are currently doing and begin to prepare the students for any upcoming future assessments.

Subjects with incomplete **Non-Examined Assessment (NEA)/Coursework will continue with this in school**, since NEA work, if it features in a subject's specification, may play a significant part in determining a student's grade this summer.

We are intending to run **some assessments in some subjects in the week before Easter, Thursday 25th March to Wednesday 31st March 2021**. These will be around one hour in length (excluding extra time), taking place in lessons in classrooms. The timetable of lessons may be altered for this week to allow for one paper to be set across the teaching cohort and allow for equity of assessment.

Heads of Departments will be in touch with students directly through MS TEAMS and other forms of direct communication in the near future in order to give very specific guidance on what will be assessed in the first assessment before Easter. As I stated above, the coming three weeks of lessons will also focus on working towards upcoming assessments, working with students to prepare and lend confidence about the material and manner in which students will be assessed.

We further **intend to run a period of assessment in the week following Easter (week beginning 19th April)**. There will be more details to follow on the length of these papers but they will not be the full length of a typical summer exam for a subject and students will be advised on the range of content to be covered. Students will be required to revise and prepare over the Easter holidays and this reflects annual standard procedure as students would normally prepare for exams in the summer term.

We intend the **final period of assessment for students will take place from the week beginning 17th May**. Again, these will be 1 hour assessments to take place in lessons in classrooms, and for some subjects where there are multiple groups and departments want to ensure equity of assessment, the order of lesson times may be altered.

We will confirm later whether students will be given study leave during these assessment weeks.

The upcoming periods of assessment are designed to allow us to collect and consolidate evidence on which to base our judgements on student performance. **We have to present the grades we intend to award to the Exam Boards on 18th June** so I am sure you can appreciate the time pressure we are now under to proceed, give the students time to prove their levels of ability to us and give us time to check that what we put forward is a true reflection of their work.

I appreciate that the upcoming weeks may appear daunting to students and I want to offer some reassurance. As an Academy we really want to be able to evidence the levels at which students are working and enable them to receive the correct grades they deserve this summer. We realise that students have been working solidly for the last two or three years and now need and want the opportunity to prove what they know and can do. We want to enable all students to be able to



progress to the next stage of their educational journey and the upcoming assessments will inform part of the overall picture to reach our judgements on grades this summer.

Plans for the students beyond the June half-term are under discussion. As you can appreciate, we are having to move very quickly on our plans for awarding and submitting grades and our schedules of work have had to be quickly drawn up and remain under review. Once we know more we shall be in touch.

Heads of Departments will be in touch directly with students regarding subject matter for their first assessments taking place in a couple of weeks' time and students will be spending the majority of their lessons upon returning to school next week preparing them with their teachers. In the coming weeks we shall do all we can to ensure that everyone is able to undertake anything asked of them with absolute confidence and the best of support.

The excellent Sixth Form Team and Key Stage Four Team including students' tutors, remain on call and committed to the continued support of our students and I wish everyone well for the upcoming weeks.

Best wishes,

Mr Lisseman
Associate Headteacher



Frequently Asked Questions

The following answers will provide you with as much information as possible given what we have received to date from Ofqual. We will update you as and when we receive further information and guidance.

Will these additional assessments be the equivalent of sitting GCSE examinations?

No, these have some similarity to what most schools refer to as planned 'mock-exams', but covering only some sections of content (not all the content) and spread over a shorter period of time. Access arrangements will still be honoured. Students will know in advance what areas will be covered and what will not.

Will my previous classwork and homework grades count equally alongside my assessment grades?

Previously assessed classwork and homework **may form part of the evidence** used towards the final grades awarded. New assessments will cover a broader range of topics than homework assessment alone and will give a more complete picture of how well students understand the course content.

What else will be taken into account when deciding the final grades awarded?

Schools may be taking into account previous assessments and mock examinations, coursework, classwork, homework and practical work where applicable. Work where students have received a formal mark and grade may form part of the overall assessment. ***For many students, grades naturally improve over the course of the academic year and this is why students should continue working to the best of their ability.*** Assessments taken in the last year of the course are more likely to reflect the overall assessment criteria for the course and may be given a higher weighting.

It is said that in previous years schools mark assessments harshly in order to make students work harder for the final summer examinations. Will this be taken into account?

Teachers will keep to the standards of assessments they have used in previous years as a guide. For example, they may use grade boundaries in-line with those of previous years to provide as accurate a grade as possible as a starting position. The Exam Boards are producing new assessment material for schools to use across the country to help moderate student assessments and ensure standards are consistent and treated fairly.

Will teachers take into consideration the disadvantages faced by the periods of school closure and home learning?

Yes, teachers will be selecting assessments and any other classroom based work and homework which students have had opportunity to cover properly. Students will receive more information on which topics will be assessed and be provided with the appropriate revision material.



Will the Academy use the Exam Board produced materials?

This is a possibility, and will enable us to ensure that our marking is at the right level and grade decision are not challenged. However, our final decision will be made when we see the material and how it fits with our own assessments. We aim to create a fair and robust approach to support accuracy in our judgement.

Can the Exam Boards change the grades that teachers submit?

We believe it will be possible that grades can be changed as Exam Boards are responsible for checking whether schools have awarded grades fairly and systematically. They have not yet given full details as to how this will be done. It may involve sampling some schools randomly or looking at individual schools if the grades submitted are significantly different to those achieved in previous years, by students with similar ability.

What if I believe the Academy has simply given me the wrong grade?

There are a number of opportunities to check assessments and the portfolio of work ahead of any final submission to the Exam Board.

You will be clearly told what the criteria will be for each subjects' portfolio of evidence. Students will know what will be included in their portfolio that will be submitted.

Can I appeal the grade I am awarded or retake an exam?

There will be an appeals process, following the results days on the Tuesday 10th and Thursday 12th August 2021.

Students will have the opportunity to retake GCSE, A-Level and BTECs during our autumn series in 2021.