

7 January 2021

Dear students, parents and carers

GCSE and A Level examinations 2021

The government confirmed yesterday afternoon that there will be no GCSE and A Level examinations sat this summer, and that they will be using teachers' grades as a replacement. There will be no algorithms used in the preparation of final awarded grades.

This means that awarded grades will be based on teachers' assessments of you and moderation processes that will be applied to ensure that final awarded grades are validated.

This should not be a surprise to us, and the school predicted this as a likely scenario and has been preparing for this eventuality since last September.

There are significant points that I need to clarify with you all today, to ensure that you fully understand what is expected of you and what you need to do between now and the summer.

1. At some point you will be back in school for physical lessons. The current prediction is that this will be after the half term break, however this may be extended if the virus is still not fully under control. However, you will be back in school at some point.
2. We have not completed courses and as such are not able to 'sign-off' your learning until these are complete.
3. We do not have sufficient assessment data for you in order to produce a valid grade in each subject. Remember, you missed a significant amount of school last year, and we need to continue assessments until at least the end of April before we can be in a position to accurately provide an assessed grade for you in each of your subjects.
4. Consequently, learning must continue (remotely for now, and then in person when back in school). You need to continue to attend all lessons, complete all of the work set to the very best of your ability, and prepare and sit any internal assessments that are given so that we can properly formulate your grades. The last thing we want to happen is that you fail to produce the quality of work you are capable of and, as a result, cannot evidence sufficiently to be awarded the grades you may hope for. All grades will be scrutinised closely and will only be awarded when there is compelling evidence to substantiate the award of that particular grade.
5. For now, you should assume that your final day of learning will be around half term in the summer term. Once we have clarification on this, we will provide a revised final leaving date. We also hope to be in a position of holding leavers' assemblies and possibly some other form of celebration.
6. We await clarification from the awarding bodies on whether the vocational examinations will go ahead this summer. We are running the January vocation exams which students and staff have worked hard to prepare for and we have students on rota completing a lateral flow test in preparation as I write.

We will be continuing assessments and monitoring your engagement in lessons and refreshing your current predicted grade between now and April. YOUR CURRENT PREDICTED GRADE MAY GO UP OR MAY GO DOWN, depending upon the effort you are putting into your studies. This is a very important point and cannot be stressed enough to you.

For Year 11: It is really important that you attend the virtual Parent Teacher consultation appointments this evening. If you have not yet booked appointments, please follow this [link](#) to complete.

For Year 13: Our challenge is that we will need to have in place robust assessment data for you that has been completed under strict conditions. Any internal grades that you have been issued to date should not be considered as Final Assessed Grades and, as with GCSE, any grades may go up or down depending upon your continued progress in each of your subjects, which is clearly related to your engagement in lessons and performance in work.

As you know from our letter yesterday, we cannot run the mock examinations in the usual way, so instead next week we will hold a **Year 13 assessment week**. These will have the additional benefit for the students of their teachers being able to provide valuable feedback on their work. The parameters of the assessment week and reporting points are as follows:

- Students will undertake one assessment (per subject)
- The class teacher will decide whether to use the morning or afternoon teaching slot and students will be notified of this. The other teaching slot next week will be used for online lessons as normal. This means that the students are not on study leave next week
- The class teacher will send the students the paper at the start of the allotted time
- The class teacher will stipulate the time it should be returned by. Students will be given an appropriate amount of time to complete the assessment
- Any assessments that are not returned on time without a valid reason will be marked as a U

Year 11 post 16 options

The sixth form application deadline has been moved to Friday 29 January. Year 11 post 16 interviews will now change to a virtual platform. If you would like any guidance on your post 16 options before this virtual meeting please contact sarah.merrigan@ridgeway.herts.sch.uk Please encourage students to keep updated with the Year 11 google classroom for postings of college events, 6th form events and apprenticeships.

I hope the above is helpful at this stage in clarifying the position for you. The good news is that we know what we are doing, we have been through this rigorous process last year and that as long as you do your bit (which is to continue to engage fully in your learning) then there are no limits as to what you can achieve this summer.

I am very sorry that examinations will not be taking place, since I know how much work has already gone into preparing for them. I also understand the anxiety that you must be feeling and worry about the outcomes. As I have said above, simply follow our advice and guidance and things will work out for the best.

Yours sincerely



Sarah Mitcherson
Headteacher