

Dear Student, Parent and Carers,

## **Summer 2021 grades for GCSE and A Levels**

### **Context**

Since March 2020, students' education has been disrupted by the closure of schools and colleges to all but vulnerable children and children of key workers, ongoing potential for self-isolation and further closures. On 4 January 2021, the Prime Minister announced, in the context of new national restrictions, that exams in summer 2021 could not go ahead as planned.

The Government made an announcement on 6th January confirming that GCSE and A Level examinations would not go ahead in the summer of 2021.

To determine how GCSE & A Level grades would be awarded, a joint consultation between the DfE and Ofqual was subsequently launched.

On 25th February, the Government made an announcement on the outcome of the consultation between Ofqual and the DfE concerning the award of GCSE and A Level grades.

The proposals being taken forward were supported in response to the consultation. The consultation received over 100,000 responses of which just over half (52%) came from students.

### **Principles**

In summer 2021, exam boards will ask exam centres (The Academy) to generate, for each subject, teacher assessed grades for their students. These grades should be based on a range of evidence completed as part of the course, including evidence produced in the coming months, which demonstrates the student's performance on the subject content they have been taught.

- Students will receive teacher assessed grades, with students only assessed on what they have been taught.
- Fairness and flexibility are at the heart of the Government's plans to ensure young people get to their next stage of education or training.
- It will be **fair**: all students will be treated as individuals
- It will be **rigorous**: a clear methodology and open process will be followed
- It will be **professional**: a quality assurance process will be carried out to check consistency of judgements across teachers and that the correct processes are followed - to ensure as much fairness as possible.

### **Evidence**

The grades submitted to exam boards must reflect a fair, reasonable and carefully considered judgement of the student's performance across a range of evidence, on the curriculum content that they have been taught.

Centres will be asked to make a holistic judgement of each student's performance on a range of evidence relating to the qualification's specification content that they have been taught

When determining grades evidence from across the full duration of your courses will be used, including previous, ongoing and work scheduled to take place. Assessed pieces of work will include:

- Student work produced in response to assessment materials provided by the exam board, including groups of questions, past papers or similar materials such as practice or sample papers. The optional use of questions provided by exam boards, as well as mock exams, coursework, or other work completed as part of a student's course, such as essays or in-class tests.
- Non-exam assessment (NEA) work (often referred to as coursework), even if this has not been fully completed.
- Student work produced in centre-devised tasks that reflect the specification, that follow the same format as exam board materials and have been marked in a way that reflects exam board mark schemes. This can include substantial class or homework (including those that took place during remote learning), internal tests taken by pupils and mock exams taken over the course of study.
- Records of each student's progress and performance over the course of study

Exams boards will provide schools with a 'bank' of questions which can be used to produce internal exams covering the subject content that has been taught.

Judgements will be objective and based on **the evidence produced by a student** on the content they have been taught.

The academy should be confident that work produced is the student's own and that the student has not been given inappropriate levels of support to complete it, either in the academy, at home or with an external tutor. Exam boards will investigate instances where it appears that evidence is not authentic.

The range and amount of evidence could vary between students and across subjects.

### **Quality Assurance**

Each centre is required to put in place an internal quality assurance process, including internal standardisation of marking and grading judgements, which will be checked by exam boards.

Exam boards will also check a sample of the evidence used to support teacher grades

Exam boards will conduct their own checks through random sampling and, where they identify a cause for concern, more targeted scrutiny.

Our successful Centre Assessed Grades process last year provides us with excellent experience to fairly, rigorously and professionally assess this work. These grades will then be scrutinised through the internal sign-off process:

### **Department sign-off**

Each grade for a subject must be signed off by at least 2 teachers in that subject, one of whom should be the head of department or subject lead. Where there is only one teacher in the subject or department, or only one is available, the head of centre should be the second signatory. Where a staff member might have a personal interest in a candidate (for example as a relative), heads of centre should make sure that additional controls are put in place, as appropriate.

### **Head of centre (Headteacher) sign-off**

The head of centre is required to confirm that the grades are a true representation of student performance. If the head of centre is unavailable to do this, it may be delegated to a Deputy Headteacher.

## Timeline

- Teachers will submit grades to exam boards by 18 June, allowing as much teaching time as possible before teachers make their assessments.
- Results days for GCSE, A level will take place in the week of 9 August 2021.
- These earlier dates provide additional time for appeals to be completed, so students reliant on those outcomes to achieve their university offer have the best chance of accessing a place.
- Courses will continue to be delivered and lessons will continue to be taught.
- Continued commitment and hard work are the way forward.

## Key Messages for Students

- This will not be a process 'done to you.'
- You have **agency** here.
- It is the quality of your (previous, current and future) work, across the duration of your courses that will determine your grades.
- This process will be driven with **integrity** and distinguished by **fairness, rigour** and **professionalism**.

Thank you for questions, support and patience in this matter. If and when we receive any further information or guidance from the government I will update you all accordingly. Attached to this letter are some frequently asked questions received from students during an assembly held with them last week.

Yours sincerely,

G. Smith  
Headteacher  
The Basildon Academies

## Questions from students

Q1. How is Current Grade determined?

It is primarily based on a student's 'current performance'. In order to determine this, teachers take into account the following: in-class work (face-to-face and remote learning); non-exam assessment (NEA); internal (in-class) assessments; and internal examinations.

Q2. With students returning to school from 8th March, can their Current Grade change?

Yes. Year 11 students will be continuing with the education and therefore working to improve their current grades.

Q3. How are Current Grades checked?

Current Grades determined by subject teachers are moderated by the Head of Department and Senior Leader.

Q4. What checks are used to determine that final grades are fair?

Confirmatory moderation will be undertaken by the subject teacher, Head of Department and Senior Leader. All grades will then be independently moderated.

Q5. When will Centre Assessed Grades be sent to the exam boards?

By 18th June.

Q6. Once the Centre Assessed Grades are sent to the exam boards, what checks do they undertake?

Quality assurance will be undertaken by exam boards. A sample of schools (exam centres) will be selected randomly across different representative centre types. Some schools will be selected based on a level of risk.

Q7. When will students receive their GCSE and A Level results?

Results Days will be brought forward by two weeks this year and will be Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> August for A Level and Thursday 12th August for GCSE

Q8. If a student does not agree with their GCSE results, what can they do?

A student who does not agree with their grade(s) must first ask their school (exam centre) to check whether an administrative or procedural error had been made.

Where an exam centre does not believe an error had been made, a student can ask the centre to appeal to the exam board on their behalf.

The centre will submit the student's appeal to the exam board and provide the evidence on which its judgement had been made.