

Dear Parents/Carers,

I hope that you are keeping well and are staying safe.

As you are no doubt aware, students in Year 10, Year 11, Year 12, and Year 13 are currently undertaking mock examinations in relation to the Centre-Assessed Grade process. I speak on behalf of the entire staff body who all share my appreciation and admiration for the maturity, dedication and focus of all our students during what is an unprecedented and challenging time. It makes me exceptionally proud of all our students who have shown incredible resilience and fortitude.

Owing to further information that has recently been disclosed to us by the government, Ofqual, Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) and examination boards about the 2021 summer examination series, I thought it seems sensible to provide you with an update this time.

Centre-Assessed Grades: Evidence

When formulating a Centre-Assessed Grade to each individual student in every subject qualification, colleagues will draw upon a full range of available evidence to make a fair judgement. Students should know and understand what evidence will now be considered in each of their subject qualifications as part of the Centre-Assessed Grade process.

The importance of open communication between staff and students has been reaffirmed regularly by the Senior Leadership Team and I want to reiterate that if students are unsure of the evidence that will be used to determine their Centre-Assessed Grade in any of their subject qualifications, then I would like them to discuss this with their subject teacher or department Curriculum Leader.

Much like formal examinations in normal years, grades issued will not consider a student's potential. We have been instructed by JCQ that we cannot derive any Centre-Assessed Grade based on a 'predicted trajectory' of what a student may achieve. For example, JCQ have stated that:

"...if a student's tracking data shows improvement over the year, having produced grade C level work in the first half of the year, and grade B work thereafter, the student should be awarded a grade B, even if a tracking system suggests that the candidate could potentially have achieved a grade A based on their trajectory."

This means that staff cannot apply hypothetical scenarios i.e., 'on a good day, Pupil A may have achieved X in their examination' because this would simply not be rooted in an evidence-based judgement and could not be applied consistently to all students.

Therefore, to ensure transparency and objectivity that stops any positive or negative bias, Centre-Assessed Grades will be based solely on the evidence of content that has been taught and assessed for each student which corresponds with the standard at which they are performing, i.e., their demonstrated knowledge, understanding and skills across the content of the course they have been taught.

Access Arrangements

The Westgate School has made formal reasonable adjustments for all students who are entitled to Access Arrangements and will take each individual context into account in any judgement made. Where an assessment has taken place without an agreed reasonable adjustment or Access Arrangement; teachers will remove that assessment from the basket of evidence and alternative evidence obtained.

If students or parents/carers would like further assurances that Access Arrangements have been accounted for when determining Centre-Assessed Grades, please do liaise with Mrs. Chopra or Mrs. Corby in the initial instance who will be more than happy to support or clarify.

Personal Circumstances

The Westgate School has made formal reasonable adjustments for all students who have been affected by personal circumstances during their A-Level or GCSE qualifications i.e., a temporary illness, a temporary injury, or some other event outside of the student's control. We will take each individual context into account in any judgement made.

If students or parents/carers would like to confidentially disclose personal circumstances that they believe may have had an impact on their subject qualification at any point during their course that we may not know about, I would urge them to discuss this with their subject teacher. Similarly, I would also suggest that students and/or parents communicate any sensitive personal information of this nature with Mrs. Ditton, the Pastoral Team or a trusted member of staff who will sensitively share any pertinent information to the relevant colleagues as part of the Centre-Assessed Grade process.

Quality-Assurance

Each subject teacher will produce an Assessment Record that will form the basis of a standardisation and moderation process when determining the awarding of a Centre-Assessed Grade.

The Westgate School will then conduct an internal quality-assurance process to uphold the legitimacy of any grades awarded. This will draw upon a range of evidence and input from the Senior Leadership Team, Curriculum Leaders, Directors of Learning, Pastoral Team and SEN Department. We have the conviction that our systematic, robust approach will ensure that the final Centre-Assessed Grade of each student is objective, and a fair exercise of academic judgement based on their demonstrated performance. In addition, an independent external quality-assurance process will also be conducted on behalf of the examination boards.

If you would like to view our 'Centre Policy' in relation to the 2021 summer examination series which outlines how we comply with the statutory requirements issued by JCQ, it can be accessed on our school website.

Confidentiality

To uphold the importance of strict confidentiality, all members of staff at The Westgate School are aware that no information or data related to the 2021 summer examination series will be discussed with students and/or parents/carers. I appreciate that this may lead to more uncertainty but would trust that there is an understanding of the necessity to mitigate any potential factors that may undermine awarding Centre-Assessed Grades.

To further protect the integrity of the grades awarded in the 2021 summer examination series, we have been advised by JCQ that if there are instances in which our members of staff are put under external pressure from a student and/or their parents/carers to influence the decision-making process, it will be reported to the examination board who may investigate this as potential candidate malpractice.

We have a professional obligation to ensure that the grades awarded to students entered for the 2021 summer examination series will have equal status to those awarded in other years and will be treated in this way by universities, colleges, sixth forms, training providers and employers.

Results Days

I would just like to remind students and parents/carers that the results of students in the 2021 summer examination series will be released and published on:

- 10th August 2021 for A-Level students.
- 12th August 2021 for GCSE students.

More detailed information regarding the 2021 'Results Day' will be released in due course, but any plans will consider any social distancing measures which are still in place in August 2021.

Appeals

If students do not feel that a Centre-Assessed Grade reflects their ability, then they will have the right to appeal.

A student who is unhappy with their grade will first ask our school to check whether an administrative or procedural error had been made. If we do not believe that an error has been made, a student can ask our school to appeal to the examination board on their behalf. We will then provide the evidence on which our judgement has been made and the examination board will consider whether, in its view, the grade reflected a reasonable exercise of academic judgement. It is important to remember that a Centre-Assessed Grade can go down, up or stay the same through either stage of the appeal process.

Please be aware that on 21st April 2021, Ofqual launched a two-week consultation on the proposed guidance for appeals in summer 2021. Consequently, the initial information provided about appeals may change. Irrespective, please be assured that communication relating to the appeals process will be sent to all stakeholders in due course.

I trust that this information will answer some of your questions but will also raise others. We are working with the government, Ofqual and examination boards to support everyone in these challenging circumstances and we will share any new information with you when we receive it.

Thank you for your ongoing patience and if there is anything that I can clarify or do to support, do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours Sincerely,
Mr. McKenna.
Assistant Headteacher.