

Dear Parents/Carers

I hope that you and those closest to you are staying safe in these challenging circumstances. I thought it sensible to provide an update in relation to the 2020 summer examination series at this time.

The process of awarding BTEC qualifications has still not been confirmed. This is still being consulted upon by Ofqual and the examination boards and once a final decision has been made, we will communicate this information as appropriate. In the meantime, we would urge students taking a BTEC qualification in Year 10 and Year 12 to carry on engaging with their subject teacher about the expectations of their course of study.

In addition, Ofqual has still not confirmed if GCSE qualifications in Year 10 or A-Level qualifications in Year 12 will be awarded to students in the 2020 summer examination series. This decision is also being consulted upon, but we do expect a decision shortly and we will communicate the outcome of this consultation as appropriate. Irrespective of any decision, I would affirm that it is vital in this new climate of remote learning to support and encourage your son/daughter to continue with their GCSE and A-Level studies to help prepare them for the demands of Year 11 and Year 13 in September 2020.

For students currently in Year 11 and Year 13, you may be aware that staff at The Westgate School staff will be following the guidance and expectations set out by Ofqual and examination boards in order to submit a 'Centre-Assessed Grade' in every subject and for each individual student. As part of this rigorous process, members of staff will be using their professional experience to make an objective decision of the grade that they believe each student would have achieved had they sat their exams this year. Subject teachers will draw upon a full range of available evidence to make a fair judgement and this will be quality assured at all levels to ensure a robust and systematic approach.

Conversely, if there is a situation in which, as a school, we do not feel confident that we have enough evidence to support the awarding of a grade i.e. a home language qualification; a candidate who is home schooled or a private candidate, we will liaise directly with those individuals affected at the earliest opportunity about the provision and options available. We expect that there will be very few instances that this may occur, and we will establish contact directly should this apply to any students.

Once our school submits data to the relevant awarding bodies, every examination board will use national benchmarking models to standardise GCSE and A-Level grades across the country to ensure consistency and the legitimacy of any grades awarded. This model is currently being devised in conjunction with Ofqual, but ensures that the final grade of a student will draw upon a range of additional information such as: student's prior attainment; historical outcomes for centres and the expected national grade distribution for the subject given the prior attainment of the national entry.

In summary, once The Westgate School has submitted data to the examination boards, the process of producing final grades will start. Therefore, you may be able to infer from this rigour that although members of staff at our school have an integral part in the process of awarding grades in the 2020 summer examination series, student's final outcomes are not solely determined by The Westgate School.

To uphold the importance of strict confidentiality, it has been clearly communicated to all members of staff at The Westgate School that no information or data related to the 2020 summer examination

series will be discussed with students 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 the integrity of awarding Centre-Assessed Grades.

To further protect the integrity of the grades awarded in the 2020 summer examination series, we have been provisionally advised by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) that if there are instances in which our members of staff are put under external pressure from a student 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 2020 summer examination series will have equal status to the grades awarded in previous years to enable students to move onto the next stage of their education or employment.

The examination results of students who will be awarded grades in the 2020 summer examination series will be released on the published 'Results Days' as originally planned – 13th August 2020 for A-Level students and 20th August 2020 for GCSE – and more detailed information regarding the 2020 'Results Days' will be released in due course.

Finally, please be reassured that there will be an appeals process for students, although the detail of this is still open for consultation and not yet fully confirmed. Furthermore, if students do not feel that their grades reflect their ability, they will have the opportunity to take examinations in the 2020 autumn examination series or in the 2021 summer examination series and if students choose to do this, it has been advised by JCQ that they will be able to use the higher of the two grades for future progression. However, please note that this process is also being consulted upon and any final decision will be communicated as appropriate.

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

If there is anything that I can clarify or do to support, do not hesitate to get in touch.

Kind Regards

Mr L McKenna
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