



RUTLISH SCHOOL

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Dear Parents/Carers,

I hope you and your family are well.

The school is aware that there is a degree of uncertainty surrounding the final grading systems for your son. However, at this moment in time, the final details surrounding the awarding of the grades has not been finalised by the exam boards. We are aware that this is a stressful time for the boys and their families and hopefully some of the details below will help you understand the process that will need to be followed to award a grade.

It is important to acknowledge that there is a fundamental difference to the awarding of grades when compared to last year. In 2020, schools were asked to predict what grades the students would have achieved if the examinations had taken place. This year, schools are being asked to base their grade on the information and testing that has taken place and award a grade based on the available evidence.

How will grades be awarded this summer?

Grades for GCSEs and most other qualifications including BTECS and OCR Nationals will be based on a process involving teacher assessment against national standards, internal quality assurance by the school leadership team, and external quality assurance by the exam boards.

The national process defined by the Department for Education and the exams' regulator, Ofqual is as follows:

1. Teachers will **assess students against a national standard**, which will be **defined by the exam boards before the Easter break**. Their assessments will consist of a variety of short assessments and the marking of any relevant coursework.
2. Departments will submit grades which will be **quality assured by the school**. This internal quality assurance process will have to be signed off by the exam board to ensure it is rigorous and in line with national standards.
3. The schools results will be **quality assured externally** by the exam boards, which may include random sampling of our school's evidence.
4. If the exam boards are confident in our submitted results, **then the exam boards will award students their final grades**.
5. If students do not think their results are accurate, they will have the right to **appeal** in August.

Once the school receives the final guidance we will publish our final assessment procedures and the schedule of assessments that are due to take place in late April and May.

Finally, during tutor time this week we are planning to update the students on the current process so they are aware of the assessment procedures that they will have to undertake so they can maximise their grades. If you have any queries about this process please do not hesitate to contact me at the school.

Yours sincerely,

Mr B Gormally
Deputy Headteacher



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How will teachers award the grades?

Teachers will review your son's performance using the guidance provided by the exam boards. Teachers will review the quality of the coursework submitted and your son will sit some assessments in late April and May. Where appropriate, additional information will be utilised by departments. For vocational qualifications a similar process will be followed and students will be awarded a grade based on the quality of work submitted.

So, do teachers award the grade?

Simply: no. The grade students achieve will start with their teacher's assessment of their performance across a range of evidence. This is against a nationally-defined standard, not the teacher's own opinion. This assessment is then subject to both internal and external quality assurance before the final grade is awarded by the exam body as usual.

Does this mean grades are decided by an algorithm?

No, unlike last year, students' grades will not be changed by a formula. The internal and external quality assurance measures will all be done by humans, not an algorithm. There is no limit on the achievement of students, providing they have evidence that they are working at that grade.

What about loss of learning / impact of Covid?

This year, teachers will only assess students on the content they have been taught because of the continued disruption of the pandemic. This means students will not be disadvantaged if they have been unable to complete the course. Grades can only be submitted if the school possesses the relevant evidence so it is important that your son engages in this assessment process.

My son receives additional support when he takes exams. Will this be taken in to account?

Students who would usually have additional support in exams will receive this in the assessments scheduled to take place in late April/May.

Will grades be different between different schools?

No, the standard against which teachers will be assessing students is set nationally by the exam boards. This is the standard that will be used during external quality assurance and appeals to ensure consistency and fairness across the system.

What evidence will be used?

Teachers are able to draw on a range of assessment evidences from across a student's study of the course, up until approximately the end of May. The exam boards are producing assessment materials that will be sent to us before Easter. Different departments may use different sources of evidence, and there is no requirement for any one type of assessment to be used – it's about a performance across a range of evidence. We are still awaiting exam boards to release their guidance and confirm the specific evidences that can be used in each department.

How will my Art GCSE be judged?

For GCSE art and design, your grade will be based on your portfolio only, whether or not you have finished it.

How will my English Spoken Language grade and MFL Spoken Language be assessed?

These grades will be submitted to the exam boards based on the standard you have achieved. It is important to remember that these assessments will not impact on your final grade.



How will the grades awarded compare to the previous grades achieved by the school?

Schools will be encouraged, as part of their overall quality assurance, to consider the grades for this year's cohort compared to cohorts from previous years when exams have taken place, to make sure they have not been overly lenient or harsh in their assessment of the 2021 cohort.

Will non-examination assessment/coursework count towards my final grade?

Where possible, students should attempt to complete their non-examination assessment as this provides important information about their performance that may not be able to be assessed in an examination e.g. PE practical performance.

Will students know what evidence will be used to inform their grades?

Yes. We hope to produce this guidance once the exam boards have clarified their process. However, students should expect that the outcomes of assessments taken after Easter and the quality of their coursework/NEA will form part of their grade.

How will my NEA/Coursework be marked?

Teachers will mark the work that has been submitted and this will help to inform the overall grade awarded.

I am worried that my mock results/some assessments were not as strong as I had hoped. Will this impact on my grade?

The school is aware that students often perform at a lower standard in their mock exams when compared to their final examination. A holistic judgement will be made; however, if your son knows he underperformed in his mocks, it is important that he attempts to maximise his marks in the assessment scheduled to take place after Easter.

When will I get more information on the tests that I am due to take after Easter?

Departments are currently considering these assessments and will inform you once the exam boards have confirmed their final processes.

Will these tests examine the whole course?

No. These tests will be focussed on the work students have completed and will typically be shorter than their usual exams.

The exam boards are only giving out past papers, how is this fair?

Most of the assessments provided by the exam boards will be drawn from past papers, although there will be new questions as well. There is significant research that even if students have seen assessments questions before, it does not reduce the validity of the assessment. Furthermore, exam board questions are only one of the many pieces of evidence we will use to assess students this summer.

Can students and parents make the case for why a student should get a higher grade?

Our teachers are already using their professional expertise to assess students on the content they have been taught. Teachers are unable to submit higher grades for students unless they have the evidence that they are consistently working at this level. If teachers submit higher grades without evidence they are committing exam malpractice.

In 2020, any undue pressure by student or parent on teachers to increase grades was also considered exam malpractice. It is likely to be the same for 2021.

Can students discuss their grades with teachers?

Teachers will be able to discuss which evidence they are using to inform their judgement with students, including marked or graded pieces of work. However, we are not allowed to disclose their final submitted grade we give to the exam board.



Students should not attempt to second-guess the grade submitted, as teachers will be using a range of evidence to inform their final judgement. Students must not pressure teachers to reveal the grades they are submitting, or to increase the grades, as doing so may be considered exam malpractice.

When do grades have to be submitted to the exam board?

Currently the final date for submission is the 18th June. Once the assessments are completed they will need to be marked and quality assured through moderation.

When can I collect my results?

The exam boards are aiming to release all GCSE results by the 12th August. This is approximately 2 weeks earlier than usual.

What should students do to improve their grades?

The best thing students can do is to continue to attend classes, learn, act on feedback from their teachers, revise, and read around their subject. Their grade will be based on their performance, and so their outcomes are ultimately in their hands.

