

**April 4<sup>th</sup> 2020**

Dear Parents and Carers

As I predicted in my last email, the twice-delayed announcement on the processes for awarding GCSE grades was made yesterday. Full details of the guidance given to Headteachers and teaching staff can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcses-as-and-a-level-awarding-summer-2020>. They are summarised in a letter to students from Sally Collier, the chief exams regulator, which is included in full at the end of this email.

In short, the process will be as follows:

1. Schools are required to give each student a predicted grade: the grade we believe they would have been most likely to have got ***“if teaching, learning and exams had happened as planned.”***
2. Within each grade schools are then required to rank students in order of predicted performance.
3. The exam boards will then review the grades and make any adjustments that they think necessary to ensure that the system is fair.
4. Results will be published as soon as possible and probably before the planned publication date in August.
5. Ofqual are working with exam boards to try and ensure that students who are unhappy with the grade they are awarded will have the opportunity to improve it by taking their exams in September.

Please note the following points:

- **This process is confidential.** Schools are not allowed to share details of the predicted grades or the rank order with students or with parents.
- Despite what the heading of Ms Collier’s letter may suggest, these arrangements currently only apply to students in Year 11. Ofqual is currently consulting on the award of grades for students in Years 9 and 10. This clearly affects many of our students in these years, and I will be looking at the details of the consultation carefully over the next few days before advising parents on the best way to engage with this process. In the meantime, Year 9 and 10 students on GCSE courses should continue completing the work they have been set.
- The guidance as published yesterday applies only to GCSE exams (although Ofqual have said they want the same principles to apply to vocational courses such as those taken by our students in Enterprise and Marketing; Graphic Design; Hospitality and Catering; Sport; and Travel and Tourism). We are waiting for further guidance in relation to these courses and I will

contact you again as soon as this is available. In the meantime, students on these courses should continue with the completion of any outstanding coursework.

I fully understand that this very unfamiliar approach to the award of exam grades adds another level of uncertainty to what is already a very confusing and anxious time. I want to do everything I can to support students, families and staff through this process. If you have any general questions about the process, please do not hesitate to email me at [head@macclesfieldacademy.org](mailto:head@macclesfieldacademy.org). Please remember, however, that I will not be able to discuss the grades to be awarded to individual candidates. Please do **not** under any circumstances contact individual subject teachers or subject leaders. If you have any concerns about how this uncertainty may be affecting the well being of your son or daughter, please contact their year leader or another member of the pastoral team using the email addresses at <https://www.macclesfieldacademy.org/home-working/staff-emails/>

Please rest assured that all of our staff will approach the process of recommending grades with integrity and consistency so that we are rigorous and as fair as we can possibly be in these very unfamiliar circumstances. We will also continue to do everything we can to support the wellbeing of every child and every family in our care. This also includes ensuring that we have a meaningful programme of activity in place for students who have now come to the end of exam courses. I will write again after Easter with further information on this point.

In the meantime, please do not hesitate to let me know if there is anything more we can do to support our students in these difficult times.

With every best wish

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard Hedge', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

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**A message for all GCSE, AS and A level students this summer from Sally Collier, Chief Regulator, Ofqual**

I understand how unsettling the past weeks have been for you, since the announcement that exams have been cancelled this summer, and that you are urgently waiting for news. I wanted to let you know what we are doing to provide you with grades. Our over-riding aim in this is to be fair to students this summer and to make sure you are not disadvantaged in your progress to sixth form, college, university, apprenticeships, training or work because of these unprecedented conditions.

**How will grades be calculated?**

Your school or college will be asked to send exam boards two pieces of information for each of your subjects, based on what they know about your work and achievements:

- the grade they believe you were most likely to get if teaching, learning and exams had happened as planned
- within each subject, the order of students at your school or college, by performance, for each grade.

This information will be used to standardise judgements – allowing fine tuning of the standard applied across schools and colleges.

Your school or college will consider a range of things like your classwork and homework; your results in assignments and any mock exams; any non-exam assessment or coursework you might have done; and your general progress during your course. This information will allow us, with exam boards, to standardise grades across schools and colleges, to make sure that, as far as possible, results are fair and that students are not advantaged or disadvantaged because their schools or colleges are more generous or harsh than others when making those judgements. That means the final grade you get could be different from the one your school or college sends to the exam board.

**Do I need to complete any new work for my school/college to submit a grade?**

Your school or college is not required to set additional mock exams or homework for your centre assessment grade, and you won't be disadvantaged if you were not set, or were unable to complete, any work given out after schools were closed.

**Can I see the grades my school/college submits for me?**

No, this information will be confidential. Please don't ask your teachers, or anyone else at your school or college, to tell you the grades they will be sending to the exam boards or where they have placed you in the order of students; they will not be allowed to share this with you.

### **I am a private candidate – what does this mean for me?**

If you are a private candidate (for example, home-schooled, following distance-learning programmes or studying independently) the centre you are entering with should include you where the head teacher or principal is confident that they and their staff have seen sufficient evidence of your achievement to make an objective judgement. We are urgently exploring whether there are alternative options for those students who do not have an existing relationship with a centre and who need results this summer to progress. Unfortunately this is unlikely to be possible for all private candidates, some of whom may instead need to take exams in the autumn to get their grades. We appreciate that this is a matter of real concern to private candidates and will provide an update as soon as possible. We have asked organisations that represent universities and FE colleges to consider the steps that providers could take when making admissions decisions this summer for any private candidates who do not receive a grade. They have told us that they believe that institutions will consider a range of other evidence and information for these students to allow them to progress wherever possible.

### **When will I get my results?**

We're working hard to get results out as soon as is possible – results won't be delayed after the dates they were expected in August, and ideally they will be issued a little earlier, so you can have the certainty you need.

### **Can I take my exams another time?**

We are working with exam boards to offer additional exams in the autumn term as soon as it is possible to do so. We'll let you know about these in the coming weeks. The information we have published covers GCSEs, AS and A levels, plus Extended Project Qualifications and Additional Extension Awards in maths. You can find out more about which qualifications and students are included, and the current arrangements for those which are not, in our detailed guidance; along with answers to other questions that you and your parents or carers might have. We will keep updating our guidance as new information becomes available, including to share details about vocational and technical qualifications as soon as we can, so please keep an eye on our website. Please be reassured that the grades you get this summer will look exactly the same as in previous years, and they will have equal status with universities, colleges and employers, to help you move forward in your lives as planned.