



Northgate High School

Inspiring excellence, fulfilling potential

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Heads of Northgate High School, Dereham Sixth Form College and DESA: Mrs Z Galley and Dr D Hone

Dear Parent/Carer,

We hope that you and your family enjoyed the Easter break. Staff have enjoyed having students back in the classroom and we have been delighted with how well they have started to approach their last term with us. Having shared JCQ information with you and asking for any further questions via a Google form, we would like to summarise with our 'frequently asked questions' (below). These will also be placed on the school and college website and updated as appropriate.

How will grades be awarded this summer?

Grades for both GCSEs and A levels (including BTECs) will be based on a process involving teacher assessment against national standards, internal quality assurance, 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 has now been defined by the exam boards.
2. Departments will submit grades which will be quality assured by the school and college as they were last year. As Heads of Centre, we will check every single TAG before submission. This internal quality assurance process is signed off by the exam board to ensure it is rigorous and in line with national standards.
3. Our school and college's 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**.

So, do teachers award the grade?

Simply: no. The exam boards are the awarding organisations. 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.

What about loss of learning / impact of Covid?

This year, teachers will only assess students on content they have been taught – because of the continued disruption of the pandemic. This means students will not be disadvantaged if they individually, their whole class or whole year group have been unable to complete their full course. However, grades can only be submitted on the basis of the evidence we have of students' performance, even if that evidence covers less of the course than usual. Students who would usually have extra time in the exams will benefit from the same arrangements in teacher assessments or marking will reflect this if time has not been given (e.g. in earlier assessments before lockdowns)



What about 'special consideration'?

This year there is no 'special consideration' as the guidance makes it clear that no student should be disadvantaged by the process put in place by their school. Staff will be made aware of any extenuating circumstances and they will take this into consideration when looking at the evidence.

Will grades be different between different schools and colleges?

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 evidence from across a student's study of the course. This may include evidence from before the second lockdown, as well as evidence from March – June. The exam boards have produced assessment materials that we can use if we wish. 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 which we are pleased is the case.

If your child has any marked work at home (e.g. end of topic tests, mock exams) they must make every effort to hand this into their teacher over the next 3 weeks. This will reduce any unnecessary stress should the exam board ask to see the evidence used for awarding grades.

When will we find out what evidence is being used?

Students have already been given details about their in-class assessments that are happening over the next 6 weeks. This is not the only evidence used and is one of the reasons we have chosen not to set exam style sessions this half term. Each department will submit an internal assessment record as part of the TAG process.

How important is a good attendance?

A high attendance has always been associated with successful outcomes. This continues to be true as teachers will be continuing to deliver content and prepare students for their next steps. Students have the best chance of success if they are present for every assessment. If this is not possible due to illness and/or isolation then teachers will make arrangements for the student to complete the assessment at the next possible opportunity. If the student is not well enough to undertake any future check-point assessments then it is likely that we have already been in touch to discuss how teachers will still use evidence to inform the final grade.

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 assessment 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. They do this all the time. 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. If students or parents are found to be putting teachers or leaders under undue pressure to increase grades, then this matter will be referred to the exam boards and an investigation into malpractice may ensue. This may result in the student's certificate being removed entirely if malpractice is deemed to have taken place.

Can students discuss their grades with teachers?

Teachers will be able to discuss which evidence they are using to inform their judgement with students. This will include historical pieces of evidence (which will include marked and graded pieces of work). Any further assessments will be marked and this raw score will be shared with students but students will only receive an approximate grade. Teachers are not allowed to disclose the final submitted grade they 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.

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.

When will students be finished?

Our assessment and evidence window ends on Thursday 27th May. This will be when our 'normal' timetable will be suspended. However, as a centre we will not submit Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs) to the exam board until Friday 18th June. We will not require students to be in school for the two weeks commencing 7th & 14th June; however, staff may need additional evidence from your son/daughter to support a grade and students must therefore be available to attend school if requested. As students remain on the school and college roll, **requested** attendance is compulsory.

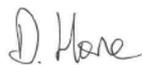
Later this half term we will be releasing more information regarding Post 16 transition and other enrichment opportunities to prepare our students for their next steps.

If you have any further enquiries regarding the Teacher Assessed Grades then please contact the exams officer, Miss Mather, at examsofficer@northgate.norfolk.sch.uk.

Yours sincerely,



Mrs Z Galley
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