

20 March 2020

Y13 Parent Update

cc Y13 students

Dear Parents/Carers,

Today has been extremely strange, and may well have been the last day of school for many students. Many students will be feeling a big range of emotions, and will be anxious and confused about what their future holds, as the news sinks in that the exams they have worked so hard for over the years will not take place. At the same time, many of our students have come in consistently, and have completed all their mock exams, while knowing that the real ones will not happen. We have all been very impressed with their resilience in the face of uncertainty.

I would like to offer one piece of good news at this time; although our leavers' party will not take place in June, we are planning to hold a farewell barbecue on the art terrace in school on results day. A recent update from the Department for Education suggests that students might get these grades a little earlier than usual (at the end of July), but we will keep everyone up to date as and when we know more. We very much want to see all of our lovely Year 13 students there to say goodbye properly.

You will be most interested in hearing how A-Level grades will be awarded. This is what we know:

- Students will be awarded a grade, which reflects their work and progress.
- Progression to university will happen in the normal way, currently on the normal schedule; UCAS has not said there will be any delay or fundamental change to the process.
- Students will be able to appeal a decision they think is unfair.

This afternoon, there has been an update from the Department for Education, which gives us a little more clarity, although there is still a lot of detail to be filled in. In essence, a grade will be awarded based on schools' predicted grades. Here is the critical paragraph from the announcement:

To produce this, teachers will take into account a range of evidence and data including performance on mock exams and non-exam assessment – clear guidance on how to do this fairly and robustly will be provided to schools and colleges. The exam boards will then combine this information with other relevant data, including prior attainment, and use this information to produce a calculated grade for each student, which will be a best assessment of the work they have put in.

We will get further guidance no doubt next week, but this is basically good news. We know how our students have been doing (generally very well in the last 3 months), and we will be able to build a positive picture of what they would have got in the summer exams, but without the uncertainty and the element of luck that exams bring. I expect that exam boards will require us to justify our decisions, which will mean moderation in some form. With the big caveat that this is my interpretation, and I may well be wrong, this is what I would expect to see:

- School submits predicted grades to the exam boards.
- The exam boards do a statistical check to see if they look sensible.
- We will probably need to submit a sample of work for moderation to prove that our grades are correct. This means we will have to be scrupulously fair, or an inflated grade for one student could bring the grades down for all students.

- Exam boards will then make the final decision and issue grades.
- There will then be the right of appeal; please note the wording of the announcement, that this will be against the process, not necessarily against the judgement.
- There will be an opportunity for students to sit an exam in September or in the summer of 2021 to prove the exam board wrong, if they still feel they have been graded too harshly after appeal.

What this suggests we could usefully do now is:

- As I have told students directly, they should now start putting together a portfolio of 'best work' which we can use as evidence for the exam board. This should include:
 - Mock papers
 - Tests done in controlled conditions at other assessment points
 - Class tests and end of unit tests
 - Marked homework
- **There is no need to go mad over this, as we are not sure this will then all be required.** A couple of examples of each, selected to make them look good, should be enough.
- The next couple of months may well be important to help prove the grade we will send the exam board. Students should therefore log on to KAA@Home for their online lessons, which start on Monday. Heads of department have been planning lessons which will allow students the opportunity to write top quality work.
- Teachers will send electronic copies of missed mock papers next week. Students should do these at the earliest opportunity in timed conditions. I must stress that these can be helpful in proving good quality work, but they can never hold the same weight as the mocks sat in exam conditions in the exam hall.

Here is the full announcement from the Department for Education:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/further-details-on-exams-and-grades-announced>

Please do get in touch if you have any questions, and we will do our best to answer them. Until we have further detail, please be assured that we will do everything we can to help our students get the results they deserve.

Best wishes,



Rob Pavey
Vice Principal - Sixth Form