



November 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

Changes to GCSE qualifications for the 2021 summer exam series

Firstly, I would like to congratulate the students for their exceptional start to year 11. They have returned to school focused, determined and with a very mature and studious approach to their final year. We can see that they are taking their studies very seriously, they are working hard, and are heeding the advice we have been giving them about how to approach this unique year; we are very proud of their response and can ask no more of them.

At this point, I want to outline where we are with any changes to their qualifications, as a result of the disruption caused by Covid-19. As you may be aware, Ofqual have announced a series of changes to the GCSE and vocational courses for students taking their qualifications in 2021 as a result of the consultation that took place over the summer break. The changes are intended to compensate for the lost curriculum time, since March 2020, and to allow for practical changes where social distancing measures might not be possible. Exam boards have since been working to implement these changes and have been gradually releasing the information to schools over the past few weeks. In some cases, no changes have been made to certain qualifications, and in others there have been amendments to examination and/or non-examined assessment (NEA) requirements.

Presently, examinations are due to take place in the summer term, although the dates for these have been pushed back and now planned to run from Monday 24 May 2021 to Friday 2 July 2021, with the majority taking place in a three-week condensed period after the May half term.

[The provisional timetable can be found here.](#) You may also be aware that the education sector has also been pushing for the government to put in place further contingency planning that also takes into account disruption that could take place during this academic year. The DfE has said that it plans to consult with the sector over this half term to develop a 'Plan B'. At this point we have no further information regarding this consultation. Again, we will keep you informed as more information becomes available.

Below you will find information for all of the GCSE subjects being awarded in 2021, with a list of any current changes to the qualification. Please be assured that all subjects leaders have worked hard to implement these changes, and have made very considered choices about which elements to remove from courses, where appropriate.

Please be aware that the list below contains information for GCSE subjects only at this stage. We are still awaiting information from Ofqual regarding proposed changes to vocational qualifications (eg BTECs) and when this information is available, I will write to you again with those changes.

Qualification	Changes to qualification
Art and Design	There will be no examination for GCSE Art this year. The grade will be based purely on the work produced as part of the students' portfolio.
Business Studies	No changes
Computer Science	Programming project - students will be allowed to complete elements of the 'programming project' away from teacher supervision, if necessary.



Design & Technology	Students will not be assessed on the skill of 'making' their product so may not be required to complete a final prototype. They will need to be able to write about their designs in detail as part of the project.
Drama	Component 2: Performing from a text - students will be able to submit a recorded performance piece for externally-assessed piece.
English Language	Spoken language - The spoken language assessment may take place in front of the teacher instead of a full class, if needed.
English Literature	Component 2: Students will <u>not be examined on the poetry anthology</u> , but will still have questions on 19th century prose and unseen poetry.
Food Preparation and Nutrition	There will be no change to the examination. The NEA will no longer require the food investigation task, but will require the food preparation task.
Geography	Fieldwork - no fieldwork will be required and questions related to their own fieldwork will not appear in the examination. Questions relating to the evaluation and analysis of hypothetical fieldwork conducted by others will appear in the examination.
History	Paper 2 - will no longer contain an element on Superpower Relations and the Cold War, and will focus solely on the reign of Elizabeth I, 1558-88.
Maths	No changes
Further Maths	No changes
Media Studies	The NEA will now accept full productions, prototypes and mock-ups. Further information will be provided to students in class.
Modern Foreign Languages (French, Italian and Spanish)	Speaking - the speaking component will now be a teacher assessment reported on a three-point scale (pass, merit or distinction) and will be reported alongside the overall 9-1 grade for the qualification. The speaking component will not form part of the 9-1 qualification. Writing - there will be some additional optional questions added to the writing component and this will be outlined to all students in class.
Music	The practical component of the qualification has now been removed; the integrated portfolio remains. As such, students will be required to submit one original composition and one performance. There is also a reduction in the minimum composition and performance durations.
Religious Studies	No changes
Science (Combined and Triple Science)	No change to subject content. All required practicals will now be demonstrated in class; students will not be required to complete the practicals themselves.

All exam boards have made it clear that qualifications are still subject to change given the circumstances nationally, and we will keep you informed of any further changes to the qualifications, as necessary.



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Progress data for year 11 students

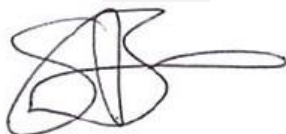
About this time of year, we normally send progress reports home to parents/carers. At this present time, we are in the process of collecting and collating this data and aim to send this out within the next couple of weeks. For year 11s this will be ahead of their upcoming mock examinations due to take place in December.

The progress report that you will receive will provide you with what we will term an 'Indicative Grade', rather than the normal 'Predicted Grade'. This is because the year 11 students have not had the normal end of year 10 mock series that informs a more concrete predicted grade, and equally, with the changes to the 2021 examinations as outlined above, and the uncertainty that remains, we do not know how this will affect outcomes and grade boundaries that might be applied (something we rely on when providing predictions).

Therefore, we will be using the data we have from the progress students had made in year 10, alongside the various pieces of data collected since students have returned in August to provide parents with a broader indication of how we think students **might** perform. The mock examinations will provide a more definite picture of how accurate the 'Indicative Grade' is and this will be communicated with students and parents/carers in January 2021, once mock papers have been marked and moderated. However, we feel that it was important for parents/carers, at this stage, to be provided with this interim information.

As always, we will continue to update parents/carers as soon as we are able with any further information. If you do have any further questions over the changes to the GCSE qualifications, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely



Sadie Batstone
Principal

