

21st April 2020

Re: Centre-assessed grades for Year 11 and Year 13 students, and Sixth Form matters

Dear Parents/Carers and Students,

I trust that you are all remaining safe and in good health whilst the lockdown continues. Further to my communication of the 26th March, I'm writing to give you a further update on how qualification grades will be issued to students this summer.

All of the DfE and Ofqual announcements published to date are available on the gov.uk website at this address:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/awarding-qualifications-in-summer-2020>

Based upon the instructions from the DfE and Ofqual, the school has now formulated the process to enable us to award fair, reasonable and appropriate recommendations, called '**centre-assessed grades**', to be put forward to the examining bodies. Those recommendations will then be analysed by the examining bodies and amalgamated with recommendations from other schools to create the national cohorts in each subject, from which the final qualification grades will be calculated. These final grades will be issued to students in August.

We expect to run our usual results day services on August 13th for Year 13, and August 20th for Year 11, and further details of these days will be sent out nearer the time.

At this point, schools have received instruction on how to generate centre-assessed grades for GCSEs and A levels only. Ofqual is still working on what schools need to do to generate grades in BTECs, OCR Nationals and all other non-GCSE or A-level qualifications, and the detail is expected soon.

The key message to all students, regardless of year group, or qualifications being taken is that:

"The centre assessment grades submitted to exam boards must reflect a fair, reasonable and carefully considered judgement of the **most likely grade a student would have achieved if they had sat their exams this summer and completed any non-exam assessment**". (Ofqual guidance, April 2020, p4)

The school has defined a broad range of evidence that subject staff will use to calculate the **two** bits of data that make up the centre-assessed grade for each subject:

1. An actual **centre-assessed grade** (GCSE: 1 to 9, A level: A* to E, grade U is also available)
2. A **rank order** for each student in the cohort within each of the grades

Please note that the centre-assessed grades recommended by the school are **NOT** the final qualification grades awarded by the examining bodies – the examining bodies have the final say. Therefore, what the school recommends may be different to what the examining bodies decide (which could be better, or worse, than recommended).

Having studied a range of professional advice available to us, we have also built in another process that will help when we work out the rank order of pupils within each grade, and we are calling this '**the objective mark**'. This is not required of us by the exam boards, but it is a vital step in ensuring that centre-assessed grades are entirely fair and reasonable. Altogether, the process we have

devised as a school provides a clear framework to assist colleagues in making the most accurate, and very best, professional judgments possible.

Once our school systems have collected the grades and the rank orders, we will be using our statistical analysis tools to moderate our own results, and Heads of Departments and the Senior Management Team will be tasked with completing this exercise before a dual signature validation of our data is sent to the examining bodies.

The school is not allowed to disclose any centre-assessed grades to students or parents/carers (so as not to undermine the national process for calculating final grades), and so I respectfully request that you do not ask any teacher, or the school, to share any detail with you.

There are two things that schools do not yet know about how the examining bodies and Ofqual will use our recommendations to create the final qualification grades (Ofqual has a consultation open until the end of the month):

1. The statistical process required to moderate and standardise all the centre-assessed grades schools recommend
2. The appeals process for students to follow if they choose to reject the final qualification grades published in August

There has been the suggestion that an examination season may be made available in the Autumn term for students where there is insufficient evidence available to generate a centre-assessed grade, and for students who reject any final qualification grade. However, it is too early to give any further details.

Some of you may be asking why I have chosen to give you so much information about centre-assessed grades, and it would be a fair question. However, my answer is very plain. I believe all Year 11 pupils and Sixth-Formers as well as their parents/carers are *entitled* to know the process that we will be following. As a result, you should have *complete confidence* in it, and feel safe in the knowledge that all teachers involved in generating centre-assessed grades at NTS will (as always) produce the fairest, most reasonable and professionally judged decisions as possible.

Changing tack into Sixth Form matters, I am very grateful to those Year 11 pupils and their parents/carers who liaised with me over the Easter break to resolve clashes with the first choices for subjects. That work has now been completed, and all other choices have been processed. The Sixth-Form team is now working on the production of the conditional offer letters, and those should be with you in the next few weeks. Once we know more about the exit strategy from the national lockdown, we will be in touch regarding plans for our Sixth-Form induction day and results day. For Year 13 students, the usual team of staff will be on hand on results day (August 13th) to assist with any matters arising with their transition to the next phase of education, be it university, college or apprenticeship.

Finally, I hope you continue to keep safe and well as these most testing of times continue.

Yours sincerely

Mr N. Parker

Deputy Head - Curriculum