

19 November 2021

Dear Parents and Carers



RE: 2022 GCSE and A-level Exams

As we begin to emerge from the global pandemic and work to address the negative educational impact of lockdowns and pupil absence due to COVID, I wanted to take this opportunity to keep you updated with the arrangements for year 11 and 13 exams between now and the end of the year.

Firstly, it is important to lead with the expectation that GCSE and A-level exams *will* go ahead this year – this is an expectation shared by the government, the Department for Education and Ofqual. Whilst there have been several adjustments announced, the intention is that year 11 and 13 pupils will sit normal exams in May and June next year.

Adaptations

In recognition of the periods of remote learning and increased absence due to the pandemic, Ofqual and DfE announced in September that there would be a raft of adaptations for the 2022 GCSE and A-level exams. Whilst these will not be finally confirmed until 7th February, we do know that for GCSEs they include:

- **Reduction in assessed material:** it has been confirmed that for some courses (including English Literature and History) exams will not cover the whole syllabus. This allows pupils to focus for assessment on narrower section of the curriculum.
- **Advance information on upcoming topics:** by 7th February, awarding bodies will inform schools which topics to focus on for revision. We will pass these topics lists on to pupils and parents as soon as we receive them.
- **Additional support in exams:** pupils will be given additional support materials in some exams, such as formula sheets in GCSE maths and some Science exams.
- **Adaptations to Non-Exam Assessment:** some aspects of NEA have not been able to be completed due to public health considerations, for example GCSE Geography field work and GCSE Drama viewings of live performances. Assessments have been adapted in recognition that pupils may not have undertaken these elements.

Many of these adaptations are being finalised and published over the next few months. We will keep pupils and parents updated when the changes are published.

Grading

You may have seen in news coverage that the percentages of students attaining high grades have increased over the previous two years, when grades have been awarded by teacher assessment. The government have announced that the national headline figures for 2022 will sit midway between the 2019 and 2021 results to make it as fair as possible for this cohort of students.

This means that awarding bodies will be adjusting the grade boundaries so that more pupils attain high grades in 2022 than in 2019. This is designed to be a safety net for pupils who may otherwise



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miss out on a higher grade. The national headline figures will then return to pre-pandemic levels in 2023.

Contingency Arrangements

Whilst the intention is that the exams go ahead, we are being asked to put in place a number of arrangements as a precaution, should the GCSE and A-level exams not be able to go ahead. The guidance states that if any part of the country should go into lockdown leading to school closures, we will once again need to use Teacher Assessed Grades as we have done for the past two years. This of course means that the PPE exams in November and February are even more important as they could be used to form the basis of your child's final grades.

If Teacher Assessed Grades are required, the approach will be nearly identical to the approach adopted by Ambitions Academies Trust in May 2021, which was approved by both Ofqual and the various awarding bodies.

Vocational Qualifications

Whilst the headings above refer to the GCSE and A-level exams, adaptations will also be in place for those undertaking a vocational qualification this year, such as our BTECs in Sport and Performing Arts. Subject leads for these subjects will share these adaptations as and when they are confirmed by the relevant awarding bodies.

I understand that there is a lot of information in this letter, however I think you will agree that it is vital that our pupils are aware of what will be expected of them at the end of this year, and how the processes are being adapted in recognition of their disrupted educational experience. The year 11 students will be having a special assembly to go through these plans in more detail before they start their PPEs next week.

As always, the best advice we can offer to pupils in preparation for their GCSE and A-level exams is to engage with their learning both inside and outside the classroom – pupils who develop a routine of revision and independent study early are more likely to succeed during exam season, both academically and in terms of their mental health.

Should you have any questions about anything in this letter, or any other academic related matter, please do contact me on tim.clark@leafstudio.co.uk and I will do all I can to help.

Thank you for your continued support – together we will support your child so that they may go on to perform to their full potential.

Kind regards



Mr Clark
Vice Principal