

1st March 2021

Dear Parents/Carers of Year 11 students,

On Thursday 25th February, Ofqual published guidelines on how grades for GCSE and vocational courses will be determined in Summer 2021. Below is an overview of the salient points from these guidelines:

- Subject teachers will be required to make a holistic judgement of each student's academic performance. To do this they can use evidence of a student's performance from throughout the course. Exam boards are to specify the range of evidence which schools will be able to use for each subject area
- The guidance is clear that teaching is to continue for as long as possible and it is in the interest of Year 11 students to continue with their learning for as long as possible. Teacher judgement should include assessment which covers as much of the course content as possible
- The Academy must assess student performance based only on what content has been delivered to them by their teachers; they will not be penalised for areas of the curriculum which have not been covered.
- Teachers will continue to mark non-exam assessments according to the normal mark scheme; this can provide an objective source of evidence on which to base their grade decision.
- Teachers will also be able to use common assessments in the form of questions or tests supplied by the exam board; these will be available by the end of the Spring term. The use of any common assessments taken by students can provide a benchmark for assessment.
- In GCSE English Language and GCSE modern foreign languages, schools will be required to determine and submit a separate grade or result for the speaking component; based on work completed towards the endorsement.
- Teachers will explain to each student the evidence they considered in determining their final grade before submitting their assessments ahead of the 18th June deadline. However, students will not know their final grade until results day; which will now be on 12th August 2021.
- Students will be able to appeal their grade. In the first instance, a student can ask the Academy to check whether an administrative or procedural error has taken place. If the Academy does not believe that there has been such an error, then a student can ask us to appeal to the exam board on their behalf. The exam board will check that the centre has followed its own internal process and will only revise a student's outcome at appeal if it finds that the evidence on which the grade was determined cannot sufficiently support that grade. Grades may go up or down following appeal.
- Where students require access arrangements or reasonable adjustments, these will continue with appropriate input from the SENCo.

- No student should be worse off because of pandemic disruption. Any adaptations the school makes to a qualification must not advantage or disadvantage the learners who are taking that qualification.
- Overall, it should be no easier or harder for a student to achieve a particular grade this year compared to previous years.

In response to these latest guidelines, Holbrook Academy intends to action the following next steps:

- To communicate with Year 11 students directly. Mr Hart has written to Year 11 students today and will be online for a special assembly on Tuesday 2nd March at 8.30am.
- To ensure Year 11 students return to school next week in an orderly and calm manner; the Academy has already decided that there will be no mock exams on their return to support with this key objective.
- To provide students and their families with an overview of when the Academy is intending on delivering any assessments to support grading. The Academy is currently awaiting further guidance and material from exam boards to support with this and it is important that students are given sufficient time to prepare for these assessments.
- Heads of Departments and subject leads will be guided by exam boards on the range of evidence they will be able to use from throughout the course.
- When Year 11 students return to school, they will continue with their programme of studies.

I do want to make it clear to all our Year 11 students that you still have the agency to make a real difference to your final grades. Please continue to work hard with your studies, keep responding to your teachers' feedback and know that the work you produce over the coming weeks and months can still make a real difference to your academic outcomes.

Finally, although the timing of some of our next steps are determined by the advice and guidance from exam boards, I do assure you we will update you further in the next ten days. I have created a new email address for you to raise any immediate questions or concerns. Please direct your points to exams@holbrookacademy.org

Further information for parents/carers and students on how qualifications will be awarded in 2021 can be found [here](#)

Yours sincerely,

Tom Maltby