



11 March 2020

Dear Parent / Carer,

### **Grading of GCSEs, A-levels and Vocational Qualifications in Summer 2021**

We are writing to you to confirm details on how grades will be awarded to students in Year 11 and Year 13 this Summer.

Grades for GCSEs, A levels, and Vocational Qualifications will be based on a process involving **teacher assessment against national standards**, internal quality assurance, and external quality assurance by the exam boards.

The national process defined by the Department for Education and the exams' regulator, Ofqual is as follows:

1. Teachers will **assess students against a national standard**, which will be defined by the exam boards before the Easter break
2. Departments will submit grades which will be **quality assured by the school**. This internal quality assurance process will have to be signed off by the exam board to ensure it is rigorous and in line with national standards
3. Our school results will be **quality assured externally** by the exam boards, which may include random sampling of our school's evidence
4. If the exam boards are confident in our submitted results, **then the exam boards will award students their final grades**
5. If students do not think their results are accurate, they will have the right to **appeal**

In order to assess students and compile evidence of what a student knows, understands and can do, teachers and the Academy will conduct both formal and informal assessments of students. Individual departments will design an assessment portfolio which will be tailored to fit each subject and its specific requirements which will comprise of a range of 'evidence points' when students will be able to demonstrate evidence of their knowledge, skills and understanding.



We will share details of these assessment portfolios with you once they have been compiled.

**We remind you that as planned, we will be conducting formal assessments for Year 11 students in the two weeks after the Easter holidays; weeks beginning 12 and 19 April and for Year 13 students in the week of 22 March.**

The outcomes of these assessments will contribute towards a students' portfolio of evidence, although there will also be further opportunities for students to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding.

We are aware that this is a challenging time for students and parents and want to reassure you that we are committed to supporting our students in achieving the best outcomes which reflect their level of performance. The best thing students can do now is to continue to attend classes, learn, act on feedback from their teachers and revise. Their grade will be based on their performance, and so their outcomes are ultimately in their hands.

And finally, we have included below the answers to some Frequently Asked Questions which we hope will be helpful. However, if you have any further queries, please contact the appropriate Head of Year for your child:

**Head of Year 11**

Mr Lancaster - [martin.lancaster@miltonkeynesacademy.org.uk](mailto:martin.lancaster@miltonkeynesacademy.org.uk)

**Head of Sixth Form**

Mrs Forster - [pauline.forster@miltonkeynesacademy.org.uk](mailto:pauline.forster@miltonkeynesacademy.org.uk)

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'A Ayres'.

**Amanda Ayres**  
Vice-Principal



## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **So, do teachers award the grade?**

No. The grade students achieve will **start** with their teacher's assessment of their performance across a range of evidence. This grade is given against a nationally-defined standard, not the teacher's own opinion. This assessment is then subject to both internal and external quality assurance before the final grade is awarded by the exam body as usual.

### **Does this mean grades are decided by an algorithm?**

No, unlike last year, students' grades will not be changed by a formula. The internal and external quality assurance measures will all be done by humans, not an algorithm. There is no limit on the achievement of students, providing they have evidence that they are working at that grade.

### **What about loss of learning / impact of Covid?**

This year, teachers will only assess students on content they have been taught because of the continued disruption of the pandemic. This means students will not be disadvantaged if they individually, their whole class or whole year group have been unable to complete their full course. However, grades can only be submitted on the basis of the evidence we have of students' performance, even if that evidence covers less of the course than usual. Students who would usually have extra time in the exams will benefit from the same arrangements in teacher assessment.

### **Will grades be different between different schools?**

No, the standard against which teachers will be assessing students is set nationally by the exam boards. This is the standard that will be used during external quality assurance and appeals to ensure consistency and fairness across the system.

### **What evidence will be used?**

Teachers are able to draw on a range of assessment evidence from across a student's study of the course, up until 11 June. This may include homework tasks, mock exams, in-class assessments and papers set by the exam boards. This may include evidence from before the second lockdown, as well as evidence from March to June this year. The exam boards are producing assessment materials that will be sent to schools before Easter. Different departments may use different sources of evidence, and there is no requirement for any one type of assessment to be used – it's about a performance across a range of evidence.

**Can students and parents make the case for why a student should get a different grade?**

Our teachers are already using their professional expertise to assess students on the content they have been taught. Teachers are unable to submit higher grades for students unless they have the evidence that they are consistently working at this level. If teachers submit higher grades without evidence, they are committing exam malpractice.

In 2020, any undue pressure by student or parent who placed undue pressure on teachers to increase grades was also considered exam malpractice. It is likely to be the same for 2021. If students or parents are found to be putting teachers or leaders under undue pressure to increase grades, then this matter will be referred to the exam boards and an investigation into malpractice may ensue. This may result in the student's certificate being removed entirely if malpractice is deemed to have taken place.

**Can students discuss their grades with teachers?**

Teachers will be able to discuss which evidence they are using to inform their judgement with students, including marked or graded pieces of work. However, we are not allowed to disclose their final submitted grade we give to the exam board.

Students should not attempt to second-guess the grade submitted, as teachers will be using a range of evidence to inform their final judgement. Students must not pressure teachers to reveal the grades they are submitting, or to increase the grades, as doing so may be considered exam malpractice.

**What should students do to improve their grades?**

The best thing students can do is to continue to attend classes, learn, act on feedback from their teachers, revise, and read around their subject. Their grade will be based on their performance, and so their outcomes are ultimately in their hands.