



Notre Dame Catholic College

Established 1869

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Letter to Year 11 and Year 13 students and their parents and carers

Dear Student, Parents and Carers,

The government made an announcement on Friday about the approach that will be taken to grading GCSEs, A Levels and vocational / technical qualifications this summer. Since the announcement, the examination boards have started to communicate their own interpretation of the process. In broad terms, students will receive **calculated levels**. This will involve teachers providing a teacher assessment of the grade they believe a student would have achieved in their subject if they sat the examinations. Teacher assessments will be based on available evidence, including performance in pre-public examinations (e.g. mocks), coursework and other internal assessments or work that students have completed. These will be submitted to the examination boards who will then consider other criteria, for example, students' performance in previous examinations (for instance, Year 6 SATs results which are currently used to predict levels for Year 11 students and GCSE results which are used to predict grades for Year 13 students). They will do this so that teacher assessments are consistent and to ensure the distribution of levels nationally is similar to previous years. Final calculated grades will be awarded to students in July 2020.

For those students who do not feel the level they are awarded is fair, there will be an appeal process and students will be given the opportunity to sit an examination, if they wish to do so, in the autumn. I understand that students will also be able to take examinations the following year, again if they wish to do so.

For **vocational courses (BTEC and OCR qualifications)** it looks like levels will be based primarily on assessment work completed by students to date. More detail will emerge over the coming days. In the meantime, I have asked teachers to ensure that students are set work/guidance via Class Charts to enable them to ensure that the work that they should have completed up to the 20th March is as of a high standard as possible. This will be in the students' best interests in terms of providing a strong body of evidence to support teachers' judgements.

To further assist your understanding, I am enclosing with this letter a summary of the key information related to calculated grades that has been issued by the examination boards. In addition, I would encourage you to look closely at the latest information from the Department for Education website that can be found via the link below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-cancellation-of-gcses-as-and-a-levels-in-2020/coronavirus-covid-19-cancellation-of-gcses-as-and-a-levels-in-2020>

I trust this information is helpful and please do not hesitate to get in touch if you have any queries.

Yours sincerely

Mrs. Costello



Information from Examination Boards on the Grading of GCSEs, A Levels and Technical Qualifications Summer 2020 (21 March 2020)

AQA Guidance – GCSEs and A Levels

- Regulators will develop and set out a process that will provide a calculated grade to each student which reflects their performance as fairly as possible, and will work with us and the other exam boards to ensure this is consistently applied for all students.
- Exam boards will be asking teachers, who know their students well, to submit their judgement about the grade that they believe the student would have received if exams had gone ahead.
- To produce this, teachers will be asked to take into account a range of evidence and data including performance on mock exams and non-exam assessment. Clear guidance on how to do this fairly and robustly will be provided to schools and colleges soon.
- Exam boards will then combine this information with other relevant data, including prior attainment, and use this information to produce a calculated grade for each student, which will be a best assessment of the work they have put in.
- Regulators and exam boards will be discussing with teachers' representatives before finalising the approach, to ensure that it's as fair as possible. More information will be provided as soon as possible.
- The aim is to provide these calculated grades to students before the end of July.
- These grades will be indistinguishable from those provided in other years.
- We'll also aim to ensure that the distribution of grades follows a similar pattern to that in other years, so that this year's students aren't disadvantaged.
- Students will be able to appeal their grades if they don't believe the right process has been followed.
- There will also be an option to sit exams early in the next academic year for any students who wish to – and students can also choose to sit exams next summer.

Pearson (Edexcel) Guidance – GCSEs, A Levels and Vocational / Technical Qualifications

We welcome the principles being used for the assessment and believe they will deliver fair outcomes. It's important that professional teacher judgements are taken into account, that a wide range of evidence is used and that there will be a clear appeals process. Students that prefer to sit a paper later in the year will also have the opportunity to do so.

For our BTEC vocational qualifications, we feel confident we can award grades for students finishing this academic year by working closely with teachers to collate completed student grades, taking into account student progress on assignments and course work to date and by sampling and verifying student work. Again, we are working to understand the implications of the current context for BTECs and other applied general qualifications and will communicate with learners as soon as we can.

Eduqas (WJEC) Guidance – GCSEs and A Levels Qualifications

Wales has clearly outlined that teacher assessed grades must be based on the overall qualification grade each learner is likely to achieve at the end of their course of study, based on their performance on a range of classroom and external assessments and on their overall commitment to their studies and ability in the subject. Teacher assessed grades, for this purpose, are not target grades or ambitious grades that learners might aspire to achieve. We will consider the full range of evidence, including teacher assessed grades, and will standardise these across the full cohort, thus leading to a final grade to award to each learner.

OCR Guidance – GCSEs, A Levels and Vocational / Technical Qualifications GCSEs

AS and A Levels

- With the other exam boards and Ofqual, and together with teachers' representatives, we're going to agree a consistent approach to how grades are calculated.
- We'll ask teachers to tell us the grades students would have got if they had sat exams.
- They can take into account evidence such as mock exams and non-exam assessment.
- We'll then use data, such as prior attainment, to decide on a final calculated grade.

Vocational Qualifications, including Cambridge Nationals and Cambridge Technicals

- We'll be working with other boards and with Ofqual, to agree an approach to ensure no students are disadvantaged.
- We'll use the best available evidence, which could include assessments that students have already completed, to confirm final calculated grades.

Your results

- We'll aim to give students calculated grades by the end of July.
- Students should be assured that these grades are indistinguishable from those given in other years.
- Universities have been encouraged 'to be flexible and do all they can to support students and ensure they can progress to higher education'.

Further steps

- There will be opportunities to sit exams early in the autumn term, or in summer 2021, if students are not happy that their grade reflects their performance.
- If students don't feel the right process has been followed in their case, there's an option to appeal.

UCAS

Following the Government's announcement, we are asking universities and colleges in England to hold back from making unconditional offers or amending existing offers to students for up to two weeks, we are extending May's decision and reply deadlines for UCAS Undergraduate applications by two weeks.

We will email affected applicants to let them know, and share new dates once they've been confirmed. This extension will give students and their chosen universities and colleges the extra time they need to fully consider any decisions and offers, and ensure fairness in admissions is maintained. It also gives more time for further information to be shared on the awarding of grades for examinations and assessments which have been cancelled.

When results are confirmed, we expect to run a Clearing process, giving applicants the flexibility to make choices throughout the remainder of the cycle.

We want to reassure students that we remain focused on making sure no applicant is disadvantaged during this time of uncertainty, and we will continue to be on hand to support you each step of the way.

As the coronavirus situation develops, please keep a close eye on our regular updates through email, ucas.com, and across our social media channels.