

The Harefield Academy

Achievement through Active Learning

Northwood Way, Harefield, Uxbridge, Middlesex, UB9 6ET

T: 01895 822108 F: 01895 822414 E: info@theharefieldacademy.org

W: www.theharefieldacademy.org

Headteacher: Tash Hurtado BA PGCE



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Dear Parents/Carers

GCSE and A-level Exams 2022

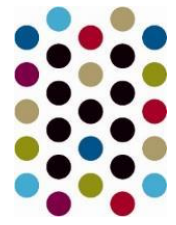
Ofqual and the Department for Education have now formally announced how grades will be awarded to students this summer, should exams have to be cancelled for a third year. This is in addition to adjustments that were announced in September, and communicated to you last month, to take account of the fact that student learning has been impacted by the pandemic.

It remains the Government's firm preference that exams go ahead this academic year, set, marked, and graded by Exam Boards, with all students taking the same assessments, at the same time and in the same way. Other formal assessments used to award grades, for example oral examinations in languages, have been carefully designed and have well-established marking arrangements. All this gives students the fairest chance to show what they know, understand, and can do.

As the most likely course of events is that exams will go ahead this summer, we would first like to remind you of the adjustments Ofqual have already confirmed:

In Art subjects, both at A-level and GCSE, the exam which normally takes place at the end of the course has been removed and the whole grade will now be based on the final portfolio. In all other subjects at both GCSE and A-level, exam boards will be releasing advanced information at the beginning of February which informs candidates what the areas of focus will be for the summer examinations. The intention of this information is that it will help students to focus their revision, so they can perform to the best of their ability in the exams. Each subject will share the information with students as soon as it is released. In school, we will then use that information to focus lessons leading up to the exam including the revision process. You will also probably be aware that grades at both A-level and GCSE have been inflated for the last two years, with more students than in 'normal' years achieving the top grades. Ofqual have announced that grading standards will be adjusted this year to a midway point between the grades achieved in 2021 and 2019, the last time exams took place as normal. In 2023, it is their intention that grading will return to 2019 levels.

Contingency plans: Ofqual and the DfE have released information as to how grades will be awarded should exams be cancelled so that schools can prepare for that possibility. They have confirmed that if exams are cancelled, just like last year schools would be asked to produce **Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs)** for students at both GCSE and A-level. As was the case last year, the TAG awarded needs to be based on internal evidence which exam boards would review and moderate. Ofqual has asked schools to collect assessment data at three different points across the year; at the end of the autumn and spring terms and at the beginning of the summer term.



These assessments should have the following features:

- Assessments should only cover content that has been taught.
- Assessments should be timed and supervised.
- Students should work independently unless they have EAA access.
- Students should not know the questions in advance or have access to materials or revision notes in the assessment.
- Students should work independently and only receive support in line with any existing access arrangements.
- Assessments should replicate exam-style papers.
- Students should be informed in advance that each assessment may be used to inform a TAG, should exams be cancelled.
- Applications for special consideration should be considered and the outcome recorded.
- Students should not be allowed to resit assessments.
- If students are absent when the rest of the cohort take an assessment, they will need to take a different but equivalent assessment.
- Non Exam assessments will be required

We will be using the December mocks in Years 11 and 13 as the first assessment, to inform TAGs should exams be cancelled. As such, it is important that students treat these assessments seriously, revise and do their very best. We will provide an opportunity for students who feel they have a genuine reason for special consideration to apply for this at the end of the mock period and will send out guidance regarding this at that time.

We will then have 2 Further TAG opportunities one in March where students sit an additional paper in each subject and an additional TAG opportunity for each subject spread over the Spring and Summer term when the students are best prepared in each subject. All these assessments will take place in full examination conditions in the Circle Room.

Ofqual have said that schools are allowed to grade individual papers and share those grades with students, however these marks will not have been quality assured. **Therefore, these grades should not be considered as a TAG.** It will not be possible for the school to generate TAGs unless exams are cancelled, as only then will Ofqual release the detailed information needed to carry out the TAG process. So that evidence can be checked and moderated by exam boards, in the event of exams being cancelled, the assessment papers that would be used to generate TAGS will be kept in school until after the summer exams have gone ahead. Students will not be able to bring the examinations home as these will be held as evidence, but students will go through the papers in class and look at ways to improve.

We do understand that even in 'normal' times, the exams process in Years 11 and 13 is a very stressful time for students and their families. We hope the information included in this letter helps to reassure both you and your child that the school is working hard to ensure that everything that can be done is being done, to support them through this process. If you would like to read a letter written by Ofqual to all students taking examinations this year, please find a link below. This letter contains links to all the information which we have summarised here.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/open-letters-arrangements-for-gcses-as-and-a-levels-in-2022/letter-to-students>

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The mock exams in December are an important opportunity for students to review and reflect on their learning. Students should not focus on them as a terminal assessment, instead they must focus on doing their best, testing out their revision techniques and finding out their areas of strength and areas for development. Teachers will use the information from these assessments to plan and adjust future teaching to help students make progress. Ultimately, this will then help students to improve in future assessments, whether they be internal or external assessments. If you do have any other questions, please do get in touch.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Helen Timmins', with a long, sweeping underline.

Helen Timmins

Deputy Headteacher

htimmins@theharefieldacademy.org