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Principal: **Mrs Anne Davis**

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23rd March 2021

Dear Parents Carers,

I am writing to give you more details about how the grading system will be implemented for the awarding of grades of GCSEs, A-levels and other qualifications in summer 2021.

Grades for GCSEs, A levels, and most other qualifications including applied generals 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 will include a number of stages. Teachers will **assess students against a national standard**, which will be defined by the exam boards before the Easter break. Departments will submit grades which will be **quality assured by the school / college**. 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. Our results will be **quality assured externally** by the exam boards, which may include random sampling of our school or college's evidence.

Students will be told in advance the evidence used to calculate their grade but, in the unlikely event students do not think their results are accurate, they will have the right to **appeal**.

So, do teachers award the grade?

Simply: no. The grade students achieve will start with their teacher's assessment of their performance across a range of evidence. This is 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 and colleges?

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. This may include homework tasks, mock exams, and papers set by the exam boards. This may include evidence from before the second lockdown, as well as evidence from March to June. The exam boards are producing assessment materials that will be sent to us 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.

The exam boards are only giving out past papers, how is this fair?

Most of the assessments provided by the exam boards will be drawn from past papers, although there will be new questions as well. There is significant research that even if students have seen assessment questions before, it does not reduce the validity of the assessment. Furthermore, exam board questions are only one of the many pieces of evidence we will use to assess students this summer.

Can students and parents make the case for why a student should get a higher 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 any student or parent 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. I sincerely hope this will not be the case for anyone at DSTC.

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.

End of Year Arrangements

We are still awaiting final guidance from the DfE about the last day for Year 11 and Year 13 students. The provisional date is **Friday 28th May**, finishing at normal time. Students will need to be available until **Friday 18th June** should we need to call them back in to complete work.

For all students who are applying to DSTC for Post 16 we will be hosting Step Up Week from **Monday 21st June - Friday 25th June**. The purpose of this week will be to prepare students for studying in a Post 16 environment. We will confirm more details and a programme nearer the time.

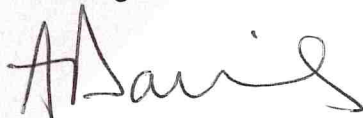
As ever if you have any questions please contact the appropriate person as outlined below

Pastoral Leader for Year 11 and Post 16 - Esther.harvey@dstc.kent.sch.uk

Head of Year 11 - Terry-ann.carter@dstc.kent.sch.uk

Raising Standards Leader for Year 11 and Post 16 - Judith.ljewere@dstc.kent.sch.uk.

Kind regards



Mrs Anne Davis

Principal