



To aspire, endeavour and thrive together

Dear Parents, Carers and Year Student,

You will be aware that there have been a number of recent announcements and changes regarding 'A' Level and vocational qualifications. I'd like to update you as far as possible. As always, this is subject to change.

Consultation on awarding GCSE and 'A' Level grades

Firstly, you will be aware that the government announced on 4th January that external GCSE and 'A' Level exams in Summer 2021 would be cancelled as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic but have yet to finalise the precise details for how students will receive fair grades. The Department for Education and Ofqual are consulting with teachers, parents and students on how grades for A Level, GCSE and vocational qualifications should be awarded. This also includes the EPQ for Y13 students.

The proposals were published last Friday (15th January) and, as a parent of a Year 13 student, or a Year 13 student yourself, I strongly urge you to review them and respond with your views. This is your opportunity to have a say in shaping the way that qualifications will be awarded and verified.

Here is the link to the consultation for A Levels and GCSEs:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/953000/6743-1_GCSE__AS_and_A_level_grades_should_be_awarded_in_summer_2021.pdf

Here is the link to the consultation for Vocational Qualifications and the EPQ

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-on-alternative-arrangements-for-the-award-of-vtqs-and-other-general-qualifications-in-2021> .

These are the principal proposals:

- students would continue with their education during this academic year
- students would be assessed by their teachers in a period beginning in May into early June
- teachers would submit grades to the exam boards by mid-June
- external quality assurance by the exam boards would be ongoing throughout June
- results would be issued to students once the QA process is complete, most likely in early July
- student appeals could be submitted immediately following the issue of results and would first be considered by schools and colleges

I have summarised the detail in the attached sheet with the aim of simplifying and shortening a lengthy document, I hope you find it helpful. If you wish to ask any questions of us, please can you email fflaherty@glossopdale.school. Respondents have until Friday 29th January at 23:45 to put forward their views.

BTEC Exams

The government announced that BTEC exams in January were sat at the discretion of individual schools and colleges and those planned after that date would be cancelled. On Friday, they also announced that BTEC exams for Summer 2021 will not go ahead, however they have yet to announce precise details for the arrangements. There has been a reduction in the internal (non-examined) assessment for some subjects; we will send out specific details of how this changes some courses as this becomes clear.



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For some vocational qualifications, some form of teacher assessment will replace exams for the qualifications, in line with the proposals for GCSE, AS and A levels. Some learners certificating in summer 2021 will be carrying forward calculated results from summer 2020. These results will be used in arriving at a final grade in the summer. No announcement has yet been made regarding the Cambridge Technical Exams such as Business Studies and Health and Social Care.

We know that students are worried about the process, about their grades and their next steps for Higher Education or employment. This is understandable and we share all of those frustrations and we have scheduled a full year group Google Meet for our Sixth Form students this Thursday and they will be emailed a link to join shortly. We will attempt to clarify some of the recent announcements and answer any questions students may have. We will continue to respond positively and professionally to the arrangements once they are announced and keep both parents and students fully informed of what we are doing, how and why, so that you can feel confident that the process is fair, robust and transparent. While the consultation takes place, and until the results are published, we expect all students to complete their studies as usual. The proposals above anticipate that all non-examined assessments will be completed and marked and therefore students should proceed on this basis. Examined assessments are likely to look very different, however, they will be a crucial component of a teacher assessed grade and therefore students should continue as they would if the exams had not been cancelled.

What is widely regarded as a U-turn by the government is likely to create confusion and skepticism and this combined with wider worries and disillusionment can lead to fear and disengagement. However, what I cannot stress enough is that students did not arrive at Glossopdale School in Year 7 or join us in the Sixth Form in order to 'pass exams'. They joined in order to be part of a community, to learn and thrive with others - both academically and emotionally - and to leave with a broad and solid set of knowledge and skills to help them pursue their chosen path in life. These aims remain.

If you have any questions regarding this process, in specifically in the Sixth Form in the meantime, please email fflaherty@glossopdale.school.

Best wishes,
Mrs F Flaherty
Assistant Headteacher
Sixth Form