



WOODBIDGE HIGH SCHOOL

Pride In Achievement

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Dear Parent/Carer,

I am writing with further details about the process at Woodbridge for the award of GCSEs, A Levels and VTQs (BTEC / Cambridge National and Technical), following the outcomes of the Department for Education and Ofqual consultation process. I shared the outcomes of that in my letter to all of you last week.

We have spent the last week examining the details of what has been published so far. I am aware that our proposed systems may not please everyone, but I hope that all of you will be aware that we will need to operate a consistent system so that what we do is fair to all students.

I have tried to explain the process in a series of questions and answers below. Please do read the whole letter and then do get back to us if you have any further questions.

How will students be assessed?

Teachers will use their professional skills and experience to assess students and award grades based on what they have been taught. They will work in departments with colleagues to moderate and check their judgements.

It is very clear that this process is about assessing what students know and can do from what they have been taught in each subject. It is not about imagining what would have happened had the pandemic not taken place. Therefore, it is important that students work hard and keep learning both at home and in school.

Each student will be given a 'teacher assessment grade' based on all the evidence that their teacher has about what they know and can do. The exam board will provide a range of support materials and detailed guidance to help teachers assess students and provide their grades.

What evidence will be used for the teacher assessment grades?

Teachers will be required to have evidence for the grades they submit. They will need to draw on a range of evidence from the two-year course, including:

- Performance in formal mock exams
- Performance in appropriate class tests or assessed essays over the two years
- Performance in assessment materials provided by the exam boards and undertaken by the students
- Performance in any non-examination assessment (NEA or 'coursework') in the subject

No one piece of evidence is more important or more valid than any other, and it is not the case that mock exams outweigh other forms of evidence. However, in some subjects (such as Art), NEA will play a significant role.

Exam boards will be providing assessment materials for schools to use. The format of these will vary by subject, but they are likely to consist of banks of questions for teachers to choose from. Woodbridge teachers will choose materials that reflect what they have taught and that will enable students to demonstrate what they know.

Teacher assessment grades will need to be in line with the tier of entry for individual students, where this is applicable in that subject (e.g. in GCSE Maths, Science and MFL).



In the coming weeks, Heads of Department will be agreeing with me and the senior leadership team the specific sources of evidence that they will be using in their subject to support the award of grades. Once we have agreed this, we will inform students of the specific sources of evidence in each of their subjects so that they are fully aware of the basis on which they will be graded.

How will students complete any exam board assessments?

Teachers will decide which exam board assessments to use for their subjects and when to use them. We are expecting most subjects to use these assessments, as we expect it will be advantageous to students to be able to demonstrate what they can do. Exam board assessments will take place in class, and the whole class will sit them so that the information can be used fairly as part of the grading process.

Will students have formal mock exams in the hall?

Year 13 will have their mock exams postponed from January. These will begin on 22nd March and take around seven days. When students are not in exams, they will be in lessons. These exams will form part of the evidence used for grading, but I want to be absolutely clear that they will not be the only source of evidence.

There will be no other formal mock exams for year 11 or year 13. Further assessments will be based on in-class tests as set out above, e.g. as provided by exam boards, assessed essays or pieces of work, and any NEA work.

What if students have not been able to complete their non-examination assessment (NEA)?

Students will not be penalised or 'downgraded' if they have not been able to complete their NEA through no fault of their own. NEA will be marked and moderated by teachers in the normal way.

Are there any specific arrangements for specific subjects?

In some subjects, certain sources of additional evidence will have more weight, for example in Art, the grade will be based on the student's portfolio.

In GCSE English Language, A Level Science and GCSE MFL there will be 'endorsements' of 'Pass / Merit / Distinction' in speaking or practical work, as previously planned.

Will students' work during distance learning count?

While we have been doing distance learning, teachers have continued to teach and work with students. The work they have been doing will be important because they will need it for any assessments when we return to school. Students will not be 'downgraded' because they have not attended live lessons, but they may receive a lower grade because they have not been learning and we therefore do not have evidence of what they know and can do.

Will teachers cover the whole course?

Teachers have been asked to cover as much of the course as they can, and the school will have to confirm to the exam boards that this has been done. This is because students have a right to learn all of the material and it may be that they need this material to help with the next stage of their education.

If teachers have not been able to cover everything, then students will not be disadvantaged in the award of grades. Teachers will not try to assess students on topics they have not covered. If there are areas that have not been covered in formal mock exams, then this will be taken into account when grades are awarded.

What about VTQs (BTECs and Cambridge Technical and National)?

These qualifications will work in the same way as GCSEs and A Levels. Students will receive a teacher assessment grade based on their coursework and any tests they have done to check what they know about the content that is usually assessed through an exam. Individual subjects might work slightly differently and the student's teacher will let them know if this is the case. For example, where a student has already completed an examined unit this can be included in the student's grade.

How will the school check that the process is fair?

We will put in place a quality assurance and moderation process. This will include departmental checks, and checks at senior leadership level. Each grade awarded will be checked by senior colleagues against the available evidence, details of which will be held centrally, with reviews being undertaken twice before the grades are submitted to the exam boards.

We will be required to set out our quality assurance process to the exam boards for checking. Exam boards will conduct random sampling to ensure that the school's processes are fair. They will use the school's previous results as a guide to check whether the grades submitted are in-line with expectations.

As Head of Centre, I will be required to submit a declaration that we have followed all the procedures as set out by the exam boards.

What if students are usually entitled to adjustments (e.g. extra time) in exams?

Teachers will make their assessments based on the evidence they have, and will be able to take into account any factors that may have impacted on an individual student's performance in any assessments they have taken. Teachers know their students and so will be able to assess holistically what they know and can do.

What are the timelines for assessment and the awarding of grades?

We want as much time as possible to teach our students and work with them to help you demonstrate what they know and can do.

When students come back to school next week, we will have four weeks of teaching time before the Easter holidays. We will use this time to continue to teach and assess what students know, and target any gaps that we see in what they have learned. For year 13, we will do the mock exams postponed from January during the week beginning 22nd March, as set out above.

After the Easter holidays, students will begin undertaking any exam-board assessments as chosen by their teachers. These will not be at a specific time, but instead when appropriate depending on the subject. It is anticipated that all assessment opportunities will be complete by 28th May.

All the evidence will then be moderated and the school will submit final grades to the exam boards by 18th June.

Will students be told their grades?

Students will be told how they have performed in individual pieces of work, or in assessments or exams, but will not be told their overall final grade before it is submitted to the exam board. This is not allowed under the rules as set out.

When will students receive their results?

Results will be published on 10th August for year 13 and on 12th August for year 11. We will give you more details of this in due course.

Are students allowed to talk to their teachers about their grades?

Students are allowed to talk about their work, their performance in assessments and how they can improve their grades. They are not allowed to ask teachers to change their grades, or try to pressure the teacher or influence their final decision about the grade that the student will be awarded.

Can students appeal if they are not happy with the results they have received?

There are two stages in the appeals process. Firstly, if a student believes there has been an administration or procedural error in their grading, then they can ask the school to check this. We will check that all the appropriate evidence has been taken into account, and we can ask the exam board to amend the grade if there is found to be an error or administration or procedure. Students cannot appeal to the school to ask them to review their judgement.

If the student is still not happy with their grade, they can ask the school to appeal to the exam board on their behalf. The school will need to submit all the evidence that has been used in the grading process and the exam board will determine whether the final grade is in line with the evidence, reasonable professional judgement having been employed. The grade may or may not be changed by the exam board as a result of this process.

Can students sit an exam in the Autumn if they want to improve their grade?

The government has yet to make the final decision about this. However, it seems likely that there will be an Autumn exam series and students will be able to sit exams then if they want to improve their grades.

What should students do if they are worried or anxious?

I know that this will be a scary time. Students should feel confident that we have their best interests at heart. If they are worried about a particular subject, students should speak to the teacher first. They will be able to give advice on how they can improve.

Parents and students can contact form tutors and year co-ordinators if they have more general worries about how students may cope with the process, or if there are wider personal concerns that might impact on a student's performance. Teachers can then be informed.

If a student is feeling very anxious or worried, they can contact our Wellbeing Team by emailing askforhelp@woodbridgehigh.co.uk. The team will be running a range of support provision and workshops as we return to school and as we go through the assessment process.

And Finally

Well done for getting to the end of a very long letter. I wanted you to know exactly what our plans are at this stage, so that you can feel confident in the school's approach.

Please rest assured that I will ensure the process of awarding grades is conducted fairly and with integrity. There is no fairness in giving all students an A* or grade 9 for every subject. That would completely undermine the hard work that many students have completed, and make a mockery of the whole system.

If, as an individual student, you have worked hard and done your best, this will be reflected in your grade, because you will be able to perform well in your assessments. Teachers know you well and know what you can do. They will use their professional judgement to give you the grade that reflects that, based on all the evidence that they have.

Having said this, I want you to be aware that some teachers, perhaps at Woodbridge but certainly beyond, are worried about the process because they feel that if a student does not achieve the grade that they want, it will be the teacher that they 'blame' and be targeted by students or parents. I want you to remember that teachers will have to make a judgement and they will do their best. I ask you to trust them as I will do. Once they have made their judgement and it has been checked and moderated by me and my senior colleagues, the responsibility will lie with me and the school, and not with any individual.

I will leave you with some light relief... it has been an anxious time for all of us waiting to find out how we will need to work over the next few months. In the end, I think what the DfE and Ofqual have come up with is reasonable and the best that could be achieved given the circumstances. It trusts teachers to do their best, and I know that they will.

I send my best wishes to you and your family.

Yours sincerely,



Steven Hogan
Headteacher

