



CHENEY SCHOOL

Think for yourself, act for others

Headteacher: Mr Rob Pavey

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Rob Pavey - Headteacher

11 March 2021

Dear Parents and Carers of Year 10, 11, 12 & 13 Students

Teacher-assessed grades for exams in summer 2021

You are all aware that exams are replaced by teacher-assessed grades this summer. This sets out our approach, so you know how we will ascribe the grades. You can expect a further letter in the last week of term, containing a grid which will show the exact pieces of evidence that will be used in determining the grade in each subject. This will include evidence we already have and evidence we will gather in the summer term, and will therefore let students know what to expect after Easter. You will get a further version of the grid just before the summer half term, which will contain the actual grades for the different pieces of work.

We are keeping the time devoted to administration and process to a minimum, in order to maximise the time we have for teaching, revision and assessment. This means that normal lessons and assessments will continue right up until summer half term (grades must be submitted on June 18; it is not clear yet whether students are expected in school in the two weeks before that date). There may be a few assessments this term, for which students will get the maximum warning, but most will happen after Easter. There will be no formal assessments sat in the exam hall, but rather a series of smaller tests during lesson time, for which students will know the topic in advance, generally about 45 minutes long.

Practical subjects will continue with practical work, which will contribute to the final grade, and will be far more enjoyable than sitting in a classroom (we are determined to get back as much missed hands-on time as possible). There will be fewer written assessments in subjects like DT, therefore. In general, departments already have a third to a half of the evidence they need for the final grade. Most departments at GCSE are planning 3 or 4 assessments (GCSE triple scientists can expect this number per science), and most A Level subjects are planning 5 or 6, generally after Easter. Final guidance has yet to be released for BTEC, but most BTEC subjects already have the large majority of the evidence they need.

Hierarchy of evidence

All evidence is acceptable from throughout the course (therefore not GCSE grades for A Level and nothing from KS3 for GCSE). However:

1. More recent is stronger than older.
2. Controlled conditions is stronger than unsupervised.
3. Marked work is stronger than unmarked.
4. For evidence to be acceptable, it must relate to the scheme of work, it must be shared in good time with teachers, and it must be substantially the work of the student.

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Calculating a final grade

The guidance requires 2 professionals to agree the grade, before being signed off by the headteacher; this should be the classroom teacher and their line manager through an ongoing professional dialogue.

Professional dialogue and professional judgment will be used to determine the relative weight of each piece of evidence, rather than trying to ascribe a mathematical formula, or simply averaging the grades.

2 worked examples:

A department may determine that 9 pieces of work are required to calculate a GCSE grade (a similar number to what would be gathered in an exam). These consist of:

- 1 piece at grade 7
- 4 at grade 6
- 3 at grade 5
- 1 at grade 4.

The final grade looks likely to be 6, but could equally be 5 if the 3 grade 5s are more recent and are done in controlled conditions, rather than slimmer or older pieces of work done at home. A 7 or a 4 do not look like reasonable outcomes. It is important to note that the grade awarded is very unlikely indeed to be the highest grade ever achieved, so students need to realise that one piece of work or assessment at grade 7 will not, on its own, lead to that outcome, but would do if that quality of work is sustained.

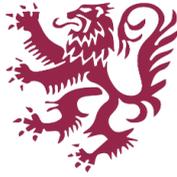
At A Level, a department may determine that 8 pieces of work are required, of which 4 are essays done at home and 4 are essays written in timed conditions in class. These are graded:

- 1 piece at A*
- 3 at A
- 3 at B
- 1 at C
- 1 at D

On the face of it, an A is much less likely than a B, because the high grades are outweighed by the C and D. The department may discount the D grade as entirely out of keeping with normal performance (or they may know that the student was unwell, for example), and it may be that the higher grades were more recent, with a clearly upward trajectory. If this were the case, an A would be an entirely reasonable judgement. It would equally be difficult to argue against a B grade, if the teachers' professional judgement is that a B is the fair grade.

SEND and exam access arrangements

Students will get the normal exam access arrangements they are entitled to; most commonly this will be extra time, but will also include other arrangements such as scribes or laptops. These arrangements will be overseen by the exams officer and SEND. If there are any assessments, past or future, where students have not had their normal arrangements, a



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reasonable adjustment will be made to the grade. Parents will get a letter shortly laying out their child's entitlement.

Mitigating circumstances

If there are particular mitigating circumstances, teachers and year teams need to know about them. This would need to be something over and above the general disruption caused by Covid. Parents should also be aware that it is entirely possible to make a valid judgement and provide a grade if there are good reasons why part of the evidence is missing, so students should not be concerned about small amounts of missing evidence. I do need to point out that the uplift provided by exam boards for students with significant mitigating circumstances is very rarely above 3%. In my last job, as deputy head I oversaw the public exams; in the wake of the Grenfell Tower fire, in which we lost 5 students, the average adjustment for students sitting exams at the time was under 2%.

Appeals

Students will have the opportunity to see and challenge the evidence used in ascertaining their grade, before the grade is submitted. This will come via the grid mentioned in the first paragraph. At this point, we want omissions and errors to be pointed out, so we can put them right before we submit the grades. We will not be able to accept wholly new material, however, because we will not have time to process it.

Students also have the right of appeal to the exam board if they are unhappy with grade awarded.

The basis for an appeal to be upheld is not a difference of opinion, but rather a failure to follow procedure or a grade which could not be the result of a reasonable exercise of professional judgment. Therefore an appeal will not be successful in a borderline case even if the examiner would themselves have given a different result, but only if the result given by the school is unreasonable. I need to be clear that it is unlikely in the extreme that we will submit a grade which could not be the result of reasonable professional judgement.

Students will be able to sit an exam in the autumn series.

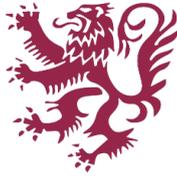
Gaps, extra work, 're-takes', 'bargaining up'

As mentioned above, small gaps will not present a major problem. In some circumstances, there may be larger gaps which make it hard to reach a fair conclusion. We have the week after the summer half term to allow a few students the chance to catch up.

I must emphasise that this will be for a small number of students, and will not be an opportunity to 're-take' assessments or to improve on marks in the evidence grid. The reason for this is twofold: time and fairness. We have to submit grades by 18 June, and cannot therefore take account of more than a small amount of extra information. It is also not fair to offer one student an opportunity to improve their grade, but not another one.

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For the same reasons, we will not be able to take account of extra work produced for the first time after the summer half term. If a student is working with a tutor outside of school, their teachers need to see the work produced in a timely manner to allow them to use it in making a judgement. The best use of a tutor's time would be to help students prepare for upcoming assessments or assignments.

Please resist the temptation to bargain grades up. We will ascribe grades which are fair, and we will share the evidence with parents well in advance (starting with this letter). I will not sign off grades which I do not believe are justified, and nor will heads of department. If we were to artificially inflate grades, there is also the risk that external exam board moderation would bring down the grades for the whole cohort.

I will be recording a video message to talk through some of these issues in the next few days.

Kind regards

Rob Pavey
Headteacher