

Dear Parent/ Carer

We are writing to you following the government's updated guidance on Friday about the cancellation of GCSE and A-Level exams in the summer because of the Coronavirus epidemic.

Firstly, we recognise the stress and shock that this will have caused our Year 13 students and their families. We want to reassure you that we will support you and your child through this difficult time and we will work tirelessly to ensure that our students are not unfairly affected by the government's decision. However, we would also ask you to recognise that we, in common with all schools, do not yet have all the answers to the questions that you will have about what happens now regarding their grades, university applications etc. It will take some time until we are fully clear about what is required.

The DfE's full guidance can be found at the following link: [DfE Guidance](#)

In summary, the key points of the government's guidance are as follows:

- *Ofqual will develop and set out a process that will provide a calculated grade to each student which reflects their performance as fairly as possible, and will work with the exam boards to ensure this is consistently applied for all students.*
- *The exam boards will be asking teachers, who know their students well, to submit their judgement about the grade that they believe the student would have received if exams had gone ahead.*
- *Teachers will take into account a range of evidence and data including performance on mock exams and non-exam assessment – clear guidance on how to do this fairly and robustly will be provided to schools and colleges.*
- *The exam boards will then combine this information with other relevant data, including prior attainment, and use this information to produce a calculated grade for each student. The aim is to provide these calculated grades to students before the end of July.*
- *Ofqual and exam boards will be discussing with teachers' representatives before finalising an approach, to ensure that it is as fair as possible.*
- *In terms of a permanent record, the grades will be indistinguishable from those provided in other years. They will also aim to ensure that the distribution of grades follows a similar pattern to that in other years, so that this year's students do not face a systematic disadvantage as a consequence of these extraordinary circumstances.*

Once the grades have been calculated, if students are disappointed with the awarded grade they will have a number of options:

- They can appeal if they feel the processes followed for calculating the grade are unfair.
- There will be an opportunity for students to sit an exam at the earliest opportunity once schools are open, possibly September/ October 2020.
- They can sit the exams in the summer of 2021.

Year 13 teachers clearly have a lot of information about their students gathered from homework, classwork, coursework (in certain subjects) and formal assessments, including the mock exams in December, which informed the Module 2 predicted grade. However, we recognise that this grade was a **partial** prediction, not a **final** prediction, and that every student is different, with some students working hard since the start of the year and others only now starting to show what they can do.

For this reason, our current advice to all Year 13s is that they should, at present, continue to work as hard at home as they would have done in school. This means:

- Students should complete and submit all work set on the VLE to the best of their abilities, in the method agreed and by the deadline set by their teacher.
- Any practice exams, that subjects have already asked or will ask students to complete, should be 'submitted' by the deadline set by the teacher using the CamScanner App or the Microsoft Office LensApp, which they can download on their phones. To support social distancing, they should not bring the exam papers into school.
- Students should complete any exams as much as possible in exam conditions and in the correct time allocation.
- Students should continue to work on any coursework and stick to the deadlines, which includes work for both A levels and BTEC qualifications.

Students who do not complete practice exams or set work to the best of their ability by the deadline set may be putting themselves at a disadvantage. However, if a student is ill, please notify us of your child's 'absence' by emailing [ehamilton@charternorthdulwich.org.uk](mailto:ehamilton@charternorthdulwich.org.uk) or letting us know via the VLE, and naturally we will provide them with an extension.

In terms of practice exams, we recognise that different subjects are taking a different approach, but we feel that this is the right thing to do since subjects are all at different points in their specification and revision schedule. We also accept that we cannot be 100% sure about students following exam conditions at home, and we will obviously use our professional judgement when interpreting results. Finally, we understand that motivation may be difficult for some students, but we want to emphasise that completing the school work, coursework and any practice exams properly is the right thing to do, because it:

- a) Provides us with more information on which to base our teacher assessments/ predictions.
- b) Provides students with a focus for their work at a time when we still do not know the full situation.
- c) Supports their deepening understanding of their A Level/ BTEC subjects, which is important learning in itself but also useful preparation for students going on to university courses or the world of work.
- d) Supports preparation for exams that may have to be taken in September/ October.

As the days and weeks progress we will learn more details about the government's plans, and we will review and update the school's approach accordingly. In the meantime, we thank you for your patience and would be grateful if you could go through this with your child, and ensure that they are completing all school work. We would also ask that students and parents do not request 'final' predicted or coursework grades from staff now since, hopefully as is clear from all of the above, it is simply not possible to provide them at present. An updated predicted grade will be provided after the Easter holidays, once teachers have had the chance to moderate and standardise their grades.

As Ms Lucas has already communicated, UCAS have given advice that students do not need to rush into accepting firm and insurance places – currently the deadline of May 5th still stands and students will have received an updated predicted grade from teachers before this date. If students have particular course-related queries, then we would encourage them to ring universities directly. However, you should also remember that the predicted grade awarded by the teacher may not be the student's final grade, depending on the approach adopted by Ofqual (the government's exam regulator) and the exam boards.

Once again, we completely understand the uncertainty and stress that the current situation will have created in some of our students and their families. Please feel free to contact the school, particularly Mr Reid, Ms Fletcher, Ms Lucas, or your child's tutor, if you have any questions about

this. As we have said many times, this is a uniquely challenging situation for society, not just schools, but as a community we will work together and get through this.

Yours Faithfully

Christian Hicks  
Headteacher

Anna Fletcher  
Head of 6<sup>th</sup> Form