

Ballyclare Secondary School

Parents/Carers Information – Alternative Awarding Arrangements for Summer 2021 Exams

On 6th January 2021, the Minister of Education, Peter Weir MLA, announced that the Summer 2021 examination series would be cancelled to help fight the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Grades for GCSE and GCE will be awarded using a range of evidence that teachers will use to make a holistic judgement for each learner and determine **Centre Determined Grades**.

This change to examination processes will again require teachers to adapt the way grades will be awarded. Mr Weir has confirmed that exam centres will now generate, for each subject at GCSE, AS and A Level, centre determined grades for pupils.

In a Statement to the Assembly, Mr Weir, MLA, Minister of Education made the following important points:

- The priority is to ensure that those pupils who are taking qualifications in 2021 will not be disadvantaged by the COVID-19 outbreak.
- In awarding Centre Determined Grades a careful balance is to be struck between facilitating progression and ensuring that learners are fully prepared for the next stage of their lives be that education, training or employment.
- It is of equal importance that we find a way to maximise the remaining time in the school year for learning and teaching and that we support young people to acquire the knowledge of content, skills and understanding they need to advance to their chosen next stage.
- **All young people are to be encouraged to remain engaged in their education, whether this is face to face in the classroom or remote learning, right up to the end of the academic year.**

In determining the **Centre Determined Grades**, the following was stated:

- More weight will be given to the professional judgement of teachers.
- There will be no statistical standardisation using an algorithm.
- **There will be a direct link between the grade awarded and the actual work completed by the learner.**
- There will be moderation of centre assessments both within and across centres.

CCEA have stated the following:

- All pupils who are in their final year of study and due to progress to the next stage of learning or work, will receive a grade;
- Focus will be on the establishment and implementation of robust processes so pupils can receive a fair and accurate grade to allow them to make the right choices in relation to progression;
- Additional training and support will be provided to teachers, heads of departments and heads of centres to assist them in undertaking the assignment of grades. This will also assist with internal and external quality assurance

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processes with the aim of having more consistency in approaches across centres;

- **No pupil will be penalised for being unable to complete any part of a course, including a non-examination assessment, during a period of school**
The Main Difference Awarding Grades in 2020 and 2021

2020

Last year teachers made a judgement as to the grade we expected pupils to most likely achieve in the examinations had they gone ahead. At that time pupils had almost completed their courses of study and were well advanced in their preparation for timetabled exams.

2021

It has to be acknowledged that the cohort this year has experienced significant disruption to their education across two academic years and it would therefore be unreasonable to ask teachers to make a judgement about a pupil's grade had examination taken place.

This year we are asked to **use a range of evidence to arrive at a judgement of the standard at which each pupil is performing** in the context of the specification being studied.

CCEA will provide guidance, support and training to help teachers award **Centre Determined Grades**.

Teachers will use the full breadth of evidence available in the context of the specification in order to arrive at a judgement about what each pupil **knows, understands and can do**.

Due to the different degrees of disruption experienced by individuals and across different schools, teachers will have the flexibility to draw on a range of evidence to inform their judgment.

Teachers will be able to draw on evidence generated that relates to any part of the specification.

Assessment Resources

To assist teachers in this process, CCEA plan to make available to all schools assessment resources which may be used **as part of the broad portfolio of evidence**. These resources will be repurposed papers, providing unseen questions and an associated mark scheme. The use of these resources will be optional for schools to support their judgements – **they are not exams and will not be treated as such**.

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The assessment resources will be used alongside a range of other evidence and the emphasis will be on a broad portfolio of evidence and not a single source. If a pupil indicates that they want to take an assessment, it is recommended that the school facilitates this request provided that the school feels that the subject content has been covered in a way that enables the learner to complete all or part of the assessment resource.

While assessments using these resources should not be the sole evidence used to support a judgement, there may be exceptional circumstances where this is the only evidence available.

Awarding the Centre Determined Grades – The Process

Stage 1 – Training Support and Guidance

- Guidance will be provided on how to arrive at holistic judgements and the evidence that can be used.
- We will then develop internal moderation processes.
- Staff enrol for training – members of the Senior Leadership Team and Examinations Officer (External Exams)

Stage 2 – Assessment Resources and Evidence Gathering

- When we return to school there will be time for teachers to carry out further assessment activities and there will be opportunities for pupils to demonstrate what they **know, understand and can do**.
- Teachers will then begin to gather evidence of a pupil's performance against the specification.
- Teachers can use evidence from the current period of home learning – we need to keep pupils engaged as best we can.
- In **April** CCEA will provide assessment resources for all subjects and these can be used as a source of evidence.

Stage 3 – Determining Grades and Internal Moderation

- In **May** schools will complete the process of determining grades and complete internal moderation.
- Grades must be submitted to CCEA towards the end of **May**.

Point to note:

- The grades submitted by a school are not the final grades and will be subject to external quality review.

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Stage 4 – External Review

- In order to ensure fairness and consistency across centres there will be a process undertaken by CCEA to review the process used by centres to determine grades.
- Throughout **June 2021**, CCEA will carry out an external quality assurance process looking at the grades submitted by all schools and colleges and reviewing samples of candidates' work to make sure the grades submitted accurately reflect the outcomes provided.
- Work from every school and college across Northern Ireland will be reviewed.
- Where there are any concerns that the evidence does not support the grades submitted, CCEA will undertake a more extensive review of the centre's evidence, engage in professional dialogue with the centre, and in some cases may require the centre to re-run their grading process.

Stage 5 - Distribution of Grades

- Provisionally the grades for AS and A levels will be **24th August 2021** and for GCSE the **27th August 2021**.
- **There will be a post-award review service to enable any pupil dissatisfied with their grade to appeal the outcome.**
- Pupils will have a right of appeal to their school or college around the centre determined grade.
- Challenges relating to the processes and whether they were followed or implemented correctly or consistently and in line with guidance will be processed by CCEA.

Who will be Awarded Grades?

All those planning to complete and cash in their qualifications this summer will be awarded a grade. **This includes those completing their A level and GCSE qualifications (mainly Year 12 and year 14 pupils), as well as those taking AS qualifications.**

Grades will not be awarded for GCSE units or modules. Pupils in Year 11 who may have been planning to cash-in GCSE qualifications this summer will not be entered or awarded GCSE qualifications in 2021.

Occupational Studies

For CCEA's Occupational Studies there will be no formal assessment in 2021. Instead, teachers will use their professional judgement and the evidence available to them to reach a Centre Determined Grade.

A moderation process, similar to that for GCSEs, will also be incorporated.

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Moving Forward – What pupils need to do now.

It is vitally important that all pupils in Years 12, 13 and 14 keep working and complete the work being set by teachers during remote learning.

Not all of this work will be assessed but it will provide evidence that pupils kept working and learning.

This is the first step in building the “portfolio of evidence” for each pupil.

The portfolio must provide evidence of what the pupil **knows, understands and can do** with regard to the specification.

The content of each portfolio may be different as not all pupils will have completed the same work due to COVID-19 related issues.

What will be in the portfolio for Year 12 and Year 14 Pupils?

Assessment Materials: Evidence from Year 11/13

- Controlled Assessment/Coursework/Practical Assessments – these may not necessarily be complete – that does not matter, teachers will assess what they have.
- Common Assessment Tasks
- Results from internal examinations and tests
- CCEA Modules completed
- Homework Activities*

Assessment Materials: Evidence from Year 12/14

- Controlled Assessment/Coursework/Practical Assessments
- Common Assessment Tasks
- Results from internal examinations and tests
- CCEA Modules completed
- Homework Activities*
- CCEA Assessment Resources – we could plan to use these as CAT 3

Homework Activities* which reflect the standards within the specification and are assessed using a standardised mark scheme. Eg Past Paper questions that are teacher assessed and moderated.

Many teachers are setting past paper questions for pupils to complete at home. It is important that pupils complete these to the best of their ability. They will be a great source of evidence of their work.

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Pupils should not worry if they have perhaps achieved a mark or result in a homework, a test or an exam which they are disappointed with. Teachers will look at the standard of work overall not just one test or one homework. Pupils mature and progress over the period of a 2-year course and teachers are well aware of this.

There is a real opportunity now for our young people to complete their work as best they can and provide the evidence of what they know, understand and can do.

Please encourage your young person to keep working hard while at home – we know this is not easy.

Pupils will also be able to show evidence of their work in classwork books, work they have completed at home and work completed when we return to school.

There is no doubt that this process will take time. It is important that we complete the process as best we can to ensure the fairest possible outcomes for our pupils. We will use as broad a range of evidence as we can to support our pupils.

There will be additional information for parents/carers and pupils when the Department of Education confirm a return date for pupils in Years 12, 13 and 14.

Mrs K Bell,

Principal