



**BIDDULPH
HIGH
SCHOOL**



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16th December 2021

FOR THE ATTENTION OF THE PERSON WITH PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

UPDATE REGARDING EXAMINATIONS AND TAGS

Firstly, I would like to thank our students for the hard work and effort they are putting into their studies at this time. The Department for Education have now made final decisions regarding examinations for 2022. It is possible that, if we have further disruption next term, summer examinations will be cancelled. If this happens, we will notify you immediately. However, the current thinking is that they will go ahead as planned.

Please find a link below to the Open Letter to Students from Ofqual:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/open-letters-arrangements-for-gcses-as-and-a-levels-in-2022/letter-to-students>

November Mock Examinations

Due to the lateness of the guidance, and the fact that mock examinations had already been scheduled, the school did everything it could to run these according to the guidance set out above. If we are asked for TAG grades in the summer, the mock grade will only form part of the evidence. Don't worry if your child has a low grade, or even a U grade. We will be looking at the marks, their other assessments, and the tiers of entry to inform their holistic TAG grade at the end of the year. The November mock examinations are only a starting point.

We have been asked to create a 'holistic grade' based on the evidence and knowledge of a student. This is NOT an average mark and each assessment does not carry any weighting. We would expect to see a generally weaker performance in the November mock examinations as students adapt to exam conditions and begin to understand the work and revision needed to do well.

The November mock examinations are used to determine an accurate tier of entry, to identify gaps that need to be addressed in the Spring and to enable students to practise their examination technique.

Students will have two further opportunities to complete an assessment; one in February and the other in May (if examinations are cancelled). We would expect the majority of students to improve on their performance in the November mock examinations, but it is important that you understand that **the holistic grade could be higher or lower than that achieved in any one assessment point.**

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We have moved our second assessment point (second round of examinations) to the week beginning Monday 28th February. We have done this to allow staff the opportunity to examine the information being released by 7th February, to provide more time for our students to address their gaps and prepare, and to give them the best possible chance of improving their outcome. These will run under formal examination conditions, where possible using questions that cannot be accessed by students and using information gathered around appropriate tiers of entry.

Students can be given marks, feedback, and grades but NOT their TAG as this is a holistic grade from all the assessment work completed. For any GCSE subject where there is coursework, this will still be used to inform the final holistic TAG grade and will be moderated to ensure fairness and accuracy.

Outcomes from this second assessment will help to determine our arrangements for the final assessment in May, should examinations be cancelled. We will update you of these arrangements should the need arise.

Ofqual has decided that for the exams due to be taken in summer 2022, grade boundaries will be set so that more students than was the case before the pandemic receive higher grades, providing a safety net for students in this transitional year.

Reminder from my previous letter

For GCSE subjects:

There are adaptations to content for English Literature (poetry has been removed), History and Geography. Teachers will update students with the specific changes during lessons.

GCSE Art will be a portfolio only with no external examination and there will be a release of topics for all other subjects by 7th February along with formulae sheets for Maths and Science. GCSE PE will be graded on two rather than three activities.

You are able to reference individual examination specifications if you would like any additional clarification at this stage.

Our three assessment points WILL contribute to the overall holistic TAG grade if required alongside any Non-Examined Assessment (coursework) where appropriate.

Our staff are experienced in putting Teacher Assessed Grades together. We work with the Potteries Educational Trust to standardise our procedures, moderate work and ensure fairness and accuracy. Thank you to all those who have been in touch to discuss this issue. I hope that any fears or concerns are being addressed. It is a fine balance between getting the best outcomes and protecting the mental health and well-being of our students.

Yours sincerely,



Mrs E Robinson
Headteacher

Ofqual states the following:

The government is clear that students entering GCSEs, AS or A levels in 2022 should expect to take exams in the summer. In recognition of the fact that students' education has been disrupted by the pandemic, they will be given extra help to prepare for their exams as follows:

- students taking GCSEs in English literature, history, ancient history and geography will not need to cover the usual range of content in the exams
- students taking GCSEs in all other subjects will be given advance information about the focus of the content of the exams to help them focus their revision (confirmed for 7th February)
- students taking AS and A levels will be given advance information about the focus of the content of the exams to help them focus their revision
- students taking GCSEs in mathematics will be given in their exams copies of formulae they would in other years have to memorise
- students taking GCSE physics and combined science will be given in their exams a sheet covering all the equations they might need to apply in the exams

Ofqual has decided that for the exams due to be taken in summer 2022, grade boundaries will be set so that more students than was the case before the pandemic receive higher grades, providing a safety net for students in this transitional year.

Where a GCSE, AS or A level includes non-exam assessment (NEA), such as a dance or music performance, teachers should support their students, wherever possible, to complete that assessment in line with the guidelines and the timescales set by exam boards. If exams go ahead as we expect, the NEA will be marked and moderated as usual and combined with students' exam marks to generate their grades. If exams are cancelled, teachers will be expected to take a student's NEA into account when determining a TAG. For art and design qualifications, for which there are no exams, students should complete their non-exam assessments in line with the guidelines provided by exam boards.

Students taking GCSEs, AS and A levels and the Advanced Extension Award should be assessed under exam-like conditions **wherever possible**. For example, students:

- should not know the questions in the assessment beforehand
- should work independently and without assistance (other than as required for a reasonable adjustment)
- should not have access to books or revision notes and the assessment should be timed and supervised.

This will both help to ensure that the work is authentic and prepare students for exams in the summer. These controls may be provided within a classroom rather than exam hall setting.