



# The De Montfort School

UNLOCKING YOUR CHILD'S POTENTIAL

12 March 2021

## Update on Year 11, 12 and 13 Centre Assessed Grades

Dear Parent/Carer

We have been very proud of how Year 11 and the Sixth Form have returned to school and have settled back into the classroom environment where they belong. As a school we are continuing to follow the government guidance and are working to do everything we can to keep our students safe and support them during this difficult time.

As you are aware the summer 2021 GCSE examinations are cancelled. This year, students will instead receive Centre Assessed Grades as their final GCSE grades. We are now in the position to share with you some of the general plans via a short video which will be available at the start of next week on our school website and social media outlets. Please take the time to watch this video as it will help to clarify the process. The video will also be shared with our students. We will also be providing further information and details through a booklet that will help you understand how the Centre Assessed Grades will be awarded in each subject. In the meantime, please find attached some FAQs and answers to help reassure you in this new process.

It is our goal that all students leave us equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in the world of further education and/or work. Although the arrangements for awarding grades has changed, we are committed to ensure all our students leave fully prepared for their next step in education and training. To award the GCSE Centre Assessed Grades, we need to complete ongoing assessments in order to provide enough opportunities and evidence for students to be justified a worthy grade. Departments are working hard behind the scenes to ensure that students are given as many opportunities as possible to show us what they are capable of achieving.

To further support our students, we are devising a detailed programme of revision strategies and techniques that will be followed with tutors in school that will not only prepare students for ongoing assessments within each subject, but also teach them the skills that are integral to life. As part of the programme we will be teaching students about organisation, self-awareness, metacognition and individual revision strategies such as the use of retrieval practice, Cornell notes, flash cards, essay planning and dual coding. This will not only benefit them now but also in the longer term in the world of further education and work.

Subject leads are currently amending their revision plans to ensure they fully support the ongoing assessments as well as ensuring that students are fully prepared for their next stage. It is imperative that students continue to revise for each subject using the strategies taught in tutor time, in each department's revision plan so that we continue to support the building of their core knowledge. Organisation is key and early preparation gives more time to memorise the amount of content required to be successful in assessments. Staying motivated during times of adversity can be difficult and we know focussing our student's mind and energy to the ultimate goal is key.

Our students are in the best position, with the best support, to achieve. If you would like to discuss any issues surrounding the centre assessed grades further, please do not hesitate to contact me via email: [tdolan@tdms.worcs.sch.uk](mailto:tdolan@tdms.worcs.sch.uk)

Yours sincerely

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## FAQs about Centre Assessed Grades

### How will grades be awarded this summer?

Grades for GCSEs, A levels, and most other qualifications including applied generals will be based on a process involving teacher assessments against national standards, internal quality assurance, and external quality assurance by the exam boards.

The national process defined by the Department for Education and the exams' regulator, Ofqual is as follows:

1. Teachers will **assess students against a national standard**, which will be defined by the exam boards before the Easter break.
2. Departments will submit grades which will be **quality assured by the school**. This internal quality assurance process will have to be signed off by the exam board to ensure it is rigorous and in line with national standards.
3. Our school results will be **quality assured externally** by the exam boards, which may include random sampling of our school's evidence.
4. If the exam boards are confident in our submitted results, **then the exam boards will award students their final grades**.
5. If students do not think their results are accurate, they will have the right to **appeal**.

### So, do teachers award the grade?

Simply: no. The grade students achieve will start with their teacher's assessments of their performance across a range of evidence. This is against a nationally-defined standard, not the teacher's own opinion. This assessment is then subject to both internal and external quality assurance before the final grade is awarded by the exam body as usual.

### Does this mean grades are decided by an algorithm?

No, unlike last year, students' grades will not be changed by a formula. The internal and external quality assurance measures will all be done by humans, not an algorithm. There is no limit on the achievement of students, providing we have evidence that they are working at that grade.

### What about loss of learning / impact of Covid?

This year, teachers will only assess students on content they have been taught – because of the continued disruption of the pandemic. This means students will not be disadvantaged if they individually, their whole class or whole year group have been unable to complete their full course. However, grades can only be submitted on the basis of the evidence we have of students' performance, even if that evidence covers less of the course than usual. Students who would usually have extra time in the exams will benefit from the same arrangements in teacher assessment.

### Will grades be different between different schools and colleges?

No, the standard against which teachers will be assessing students is set nationally by the exam boards. This is the standard that will be used during external quality assurance and appeals to ensure consistency and fairness across the system.



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## **What evidence will be used?**

Teachers are able to draw on a range of assessment evidence from across a student's study of the course from years 9 to 11. This may include mock exams, assessments and papers set by the exam boards. The exam boards are producing assessment materials that will be sent to us before Easter. Different departments may use different sources of evidence, and there is no requirement for any one type of assessment to be used – it's about a performance across a range of evidence.

## **The exam boards are only giving out past papers, how is this fair?**

Most of the assessments provided by the exam boards will be drawn from past papers, although there will be new questions as well. There is significant research that even if students have seen assessments questions before, it does not reduce the validity of the assessment. Furthermore, exam board questions are only one of the many pieces of evidence we will use to assess students this summer.

## **Can students and parents make the case for why a student should get a higher grade?**

Our teachers are already using their professional expertise to assess students on the content they have been taught. Teachers are unable to submit higher grades for students unless they have the evidence that they are consistently working at this level. If teachers submit higher grades without evidence they are committing exam malpractice.

In 2020, any undue pressure by student or parent who placed undue pressure on teachers to increase grades was also considered exam malpractice. It is likely to be the same for 2021. If students or parents are found to be putting teachers or leaders under undue pressure to increase grades, then this matter will be referred to the exam boards and an investigation into malpractice may ensue. This may result in the student's certificate being removed entirely if malpractice is deemed to have taken place.

## **Can students discuss their grades with teachers?**

Teachers will be able to discuss which evidence they are using to inform their judgement with students, including marked or graded pieces of work.

However, we are not allowed to disclose their final submitted grade we give to the exam board.

Students should not attempt to second-guess the grade submitted, as teachers will be using a range of evidence to inform their final judgement. Students must not pressure teachers to reveal the grades they are submitting, or to increase the grades, as doing so may be considered exam malpractice.

## **What should students do to improve their grades?**

The best thing students can do is to continue to attend classes, learn, act on feedback from their teachers, revise and complete all homework set. Their grade will be based on their performance, and so their outcomes are ultimately in their hands.