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# Poynton High School

## and Performing Arts College

Head Teacher: Mr M Dean

Monday, 18 January 2021

Dear Year 13 students,

I wanted to write to congratulate you on the impressive start you have made to the year and also to update you on the government's proposals for the replacements for exams in 2021.

Your teachers have reported to me how impressed they are with the levels of engagement in learning online and we are very proud of how well you have responded in the face of so much uncertainty. I hope that you continue to show these levels of resilience in the weeks to come.

I want to give you some reassurance as I know that some of you will be uncertain about what the changes to exams mean for you. The points below are worth bearing in mind.

- Your continued hard work will be really valuable. Whatever the final system for awarding grades, hard work can only ever help you to gain a better grade. No-one will look back at the end of 2021 and think 'I wish I had worked a bit less hard'! Keep working hard in lessons and in the work that you are completing for feedback.
- Your results will have exactly the same status as BTECs and A levels in a normal year. Employers, colleges and universities will all value them and they will help you to progress to where you want to go.
- Everyone in the country is in the same position. The BTECs and A levels across England are affected in the same way. Every school is having to give the same advice to their students and so everyone of your age group is in exactly the same boat.
- Your teachers are experienced and are committed to delivering a really high-quality education to you. At Poynton we have a track record of getting good results and that is because your teachers support all our students so well to learn. These high standards should give you real confidence.
- Above all we will do our very best to ensure that you get the grades that you deserve. Your job now is to be your best and work your hardest.

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## Government consultation on how grades should be awarded in summer 2021.

On 15 January 2021 the government launched consultations into their proposals for how grades should be awarded. One consultation covers GCSEs and A levels <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-on-how-gcse-as-and-a-level-grades-should-be-awarded-in-summer-2021> and the other covers Vocational and Technical Qualifications (BTECs and Cambridge Nationals) and other general qualifications (such as EPQ) <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-on-alternative-arrangements-for-the-award-of-vtqs-and-other-general-qualifications-in-2021>.

The deadline for responding to these consultations is 29 January 2021. I would encourage you and your parents to respond to the consultation so that your voice can be heard. We expect the outcome of the consultation to be announced in mid-February. When the final plans are published I will write again and you will have a chance to ask questions then.

## What are the government proposals?

I have summarised the government proposals below but do remember that until the consultation has concluded they are only proposals and they could change. Words in *italics* are my words to clarify something they have said.

- In summer 2021 a student's grade in each subject will be based on their teachers' assessment of the standard at which the student is performing.
- Exam boards should provide guidance and training, and make available a set of papers, which teachers use with their students as part of their assessment. *They are consulting on whether these papers should be used by teachers within a set period of time.*
- Students this year should be given time to complete their non-exam assessments, to contribute to the evidence teachers use to determine the grade the student should receive.
- Teachers should draw on a range of broader evidence of a student's work in making their final assessment. *They are consulting on what that evidence can be.*
- They propose that:
  - students will continue with their education during this academic year
  - students will be assessed by their teachers in a period beginning in May into early June
  - teachers will submit grades to the exam boards by mid-June
  - external quality assurance by the exam boards will be ongoing throughout June
  - results will be issued to students once the QA process is complete, most likely in early July
  - student appeals could be submitted immediately following the issue of results and would first be considered by schools and colleges
- Teachers should assess their students objectively. To support them the exam boards could provide guidance and training, along with papers which teachers could use to assess their students. The exam boards might work jointly on the guidance and training where appropriate. The consultation seeks views on the role of these papers in informing a teacher's assessment of a student's grade.



- The exam boards should quality assure the approach taken by each school. Exam boards should also sample, at subject level, the evidence on which the submitted grades were based.
- Teachers should not tell students the grade they have submitted to the exam boards on their behalf. However, once results have been issued a student who believes their teacher has made an error when they assessed their performance in 2021 should be able to appeal to their school or college on that basis. The review would encompass both a review of the marking of any papers provided by the exam board or the school or college itself, the marking of any non-exam assessment, as well as a review of the other evidence used by the teacher to arrive at the overall grade.
- A student should also be able to appeal further to the exam board. This would not be an appeal on the merits of the teacher assessment of the school or college’s appeal decision. Rather an appeal to the exam board would be on the grounds that the school or college had not acted in line with the exam board’s procedural requirements, either when assessing the standard at which the student was performing or when considering the student’s appeal. A student could not appeal to the exam board on the basis that either the teacher assessment or the appeal decision was not a reasonable exercise of academic judgment where the correct procedure had been followed.

What can you do?

- Read and respond to the consultation if you wish.
- Continue to work hard on any NEAs that are not yet completed.
- Continue to work hard in lessons and on any work that you are set to do. No single piece of work will decide your grade.
- Engage in lessons and respond to feedback.
- Don’t ask your teachers what grade they will give you. Grades will not be decided until May or June and even then we have been told that we cannot tell you.
- Don’t worry as your assessed grade will not be determined by your guidance grade, your attainment grade on past reports or your mark in any one piece of work.

Above all, stay positive. As a year group you have impressed us with the way you have engaged with learning in 2021 and if you continue to work hard you will do yourself proud.

Be your best!

*Matthew Dean*

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