



Friday, 19 March 2021

Dear Parents,

Please find enclosed within this letter further details about the assessment processes that will be taking place over the coming months for years 11 and 13. All students have been given a subject information pack that includes information about upcoming assessments – dates, topics to learn and advice on how students can best prepare.

Ofqual Guidance

This year, the government has instructed teachers to award grades for students this summer in lieu of the GCSE/GCE exams that have been cancelled. The government's Ofqual guidance states that teachers must assess students' performance, using evidence of their performance from throughout the course to inform their judgement. Schools and colleges have been asked to use a broad range of substantial and robust evidence across the taught content to determine the grades before submitting these grades to the exam boards in June. The Ofqual guidance also states that any assessment process adopted by schools should have integrity, be transparent and support students in progressing to the next stage of their education. Ofqual guidance to schools says "it should not be easier or more difficult to get a grade than in pre-COVID times". Enclosed with this letter is further guidance for parents and students from the DFE website.

Assessments at SNA

As a school, we have planned three assessment windows over the coming months and have developed an assessment policy and timeline in line with the guidance from DfE, Ofqual, JCQ and the various exam boards. Assessments will be clear, fair, transparent and robust across the school. Our approach will recognise student progress and achievement and will not unfairly disadvantage students for COVID disruption, however, as all grades awarded must be based on evidence of student work (gathered into a portfolio), students will be expected to work hard and prepare for a series of assessments over the coming months.

The three assessment windows for year 11 and 13 are shown in the table below. The first two windows will be 'in class assessments', run in the classroom during normal lessons, most subjects plan to do one assessment in each window. The final window being an exam fortnight where students will sit some longer assessments (likely to reflect full exam papers)



in the exam room/sports hall. Again, most subjects will be sitting one paper in this window. All assessments taking place over the exam fortnight will be unseen. In addition, each of the assessments will factor in any access arrangements for authorised students. Details about each of the assessments will be included in the student packs. Students should expect that each of these assessments will contribute towards their final grade and treat them accordingly.

Question materials provided by the exam boards will be used that will be a combination of existing past paper questions and newly authored questions. There are a range of other past-paper materials that will also be appropriate, including papers written for the Autumn 2020 series that are still secure. Using these materials will be the most fair and robust method of assessment, given the mark schemes and exemplar work will be authored by senior examiners.

		Year 11	Year 13
WB 8 th March	1		
WB 15 th March	2		
WB 22 nd March	3	In-class assessment week	In-class assessment week
WB 29 th March	4	In-class assessment week	In-class assessment week
WB 5 th April			
WB 12 th April			
WB 19 th April	5	In-class assessment week	In-class assessment week
WB 26 th April	6	In-class assessment week	In-class assessment week
WB 3 rd May	7		
WB 10 th May	8		
WB 17 th May	9	Exam Week	Exam Week
WB 24 th May	10	Exam Week	Exam Week
WB 31 st May			
WB 7 th June	11	Exam Week (This is a flexible week and will be used to accommodate any missed or additional assessment pieces for portfolios) Student Portfolio deadline: 11th June	
WB 14 th June	12	Final grade entry and dept sign off	

Determining Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs)

Each student will have a 'portfolio of evidence' that we will be used to inform the Teacher Assessed Grade (TAG). This will be at least 5 data points, including any Non-Examined Assessment (coursework) if applicable. We will be fully transparent about the components that we will be using in each subject for assessment so that there will be 'no surprises.'

The portfolio of evidence could include:

- work produced in class or at home (including remote learning, where schools are confident it is the students' own, unaided work). This would be expected to be similar in format as exam board material and marked using exam board mark schemes
- tests and mock exams taken over the course of study
- work produced in response to the additional assessment materials (mini tests) to be provided by the exam board
- non-exam assessment (NEA) work even if this has not been fully completed
- records of a student's capability and performance over the course of study in performance-based subjects such as music, drama and PE

While we cannot disclose the TAG that we will be submitting (since it will be subject to Quality Assurance and potential adjustment by the exam boards), students will have a good idea of where they are 'working at' via feedback upon their assessments. Teachers have been advised to share scores but not grades with students beyond this point.

Each subject will decide the weightings of different components in the evidence, but with a greater weight towards assessments towards the end of the course. There won't be a simple calculated average, teachers will apply their professional judgement to come up with grade that fairly represents the achievement of each student, supported by the portfolio of evidence.

Determining that grades are fair

Schools will be expected to have internal quality assurance systems (including moderation) and checking of grades before they are submitted. This internal quality assurance will also include consideration of South Nottinghamshire Academy's profile of results in previous years as a guide to help check that judgements aren't unduly harsh or lenient. Exam boards will review all schools' quality assurance processes before grades are submitted. Once grades are submitted, the exam board will conduct various checks to make sure grades submitted are fair and consistent across centres. This will include sampling of evidence.

If there are concerns with the grades submitted, the exam board will work with the school to address this before results day. (Exam boards will not 'remark' the work).

The deadline for completion of portfolios is 11th June, the deadline for teacher's submission of marks to exam boards is 18th June. We are still awaiting confirmation of the leaving day for both years 11 and 13, the government has not yet confirmed this. We would expect all students to be coming to school until at least 11th June but we will confirm this in due course.

Results days are confirmed as Tuesday 10th August 2021 for year 13 and Thursday 12th August 2021 for year 11. The sixth form team will be available to support with post-results advice and guidance. Induction days for year 11s joining the sixth form will be in July 2021

(Dates TBC). This will include A-level bridging work and summer work that needs to be completed before the start of the new term. The enrolment for Sixth Form will take place on GCSE Results Day (12th August 2021)

Appeals

The Government has stated that students do have the opportunity to appeal grade decisions however, it is important to emphasise the following points. Teachers have been expressly forbidden from disclosing the Teacher Assessed Grade before results day. Students and parents should not apply pressure on teachers to produce a particular grade: the only route to a higher grade will be more effort and higher attainment in the assessments to come. It is also important to understand that the basis for appeals will be limited. Clearly, we will quickly correct clerical errors if identified, but exam boards will not be 're-marking' school-based assessments. There is an option to ask the exam board to examine the evidence used and if the grade "reflected an appropriate exercise of academic judgement." Given that our experienced teachers will be using materials and mark schemes from the exam boards themselves to evidence our grades and our submissions will have been Quality Assured at multiple points, we would expect the boards to support our judgements. There will be an Autumn exam series in 2021 where students can enter for formal exams to be externally marked should students be unhappy with the awarded grade.

We wish to reassure you that every professional at South Nottinghamshire Academy is committed to supporting your child over the coming months. As more details become available from the government, we will endeavour to respond swiftly and ensure to communicate clearly with students and parents. By outlining our plans at this point to students we hope to provide clarity and a degree of certainty for students at this uncertain time. We are confident the process identified above will support students in evidencing their grades for the summer in a fair and supported way. For now, it is essential that students continue to work hard, complete all work set by teachers and respond to feedback so that the final evidence base shows their very best achievements and they can receive the grades they deserve and have access to their next phase of education or work.

We wish all students the very best of luck in the forthcoming assessments.

Yours Sincerely,

Mrs Sharpe
Assistant Headteacher
Curriculum and Data