



Venerable Bede Church of England Academy

Dayspring Trust



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TBU/CMI

7th April 2021

Year 11 Curriculum & Exams – April 2021 update

Dear Parents / Carers

Please find attached a Curriculum & Exams Update for Year 11 and an infographic produced by Ofqual (The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulations) which summarises how grades will be awarded in summer 2021.

Kind regards,

Mrs T Burgess
Deputy Headteacher



Year 11 can be a challenging time for pupils – this year in particular, Year 11 pupils are facing a level of uncertainty and what to expect in the summer of 2021. This Curriculum and Exams Update is intended to inform you of some of the information and changes for 2020/21, address some of those uncertainties and help to answer some of the questions you and your child may have. Please note: This information is accurate at the time of writing; however, arrangements are subject to change by the Department for Education and Ofqual - as any new announcements are made, we will of course keep you informed as soon as practicable.

Summer 2021 Grades

Following the initial announcement made by the Department for Education (DfE) in January which stated that “GCSE, AS and A level exams will not be going ahead as planned this summer”, on 25th February 2021, the Secretary of State for Education announced that pupils will receive grades determined by teachers:

“This year, we will ask those who know students best – their teachers – to assess them so they can progress to the next stages of their education or careers and not be disadvantaged by the disruption of the last year.” Secretary of State for Education

The DfE also gave some detailed guidance about the awarding of grades to Year 11 pupils in summer 2021. **In recent weeks, senior leaders, curriculum leaders and teachers have together been exploring the implications of this guidance and the, following key messages from the DfE:**

Assessment evidence

Teachers are able to use a range of evidence to make a judgement of the grade a pupil is performing at. Pupils need to be assessed on what they have been taught, ensuring sufficient coverage of the curriculum to enable progression. Teachers have been asked to use the Year 11 time remaining to balance continued teaching with any assessments they want to undertake.

Types of assessment evidence

The DfE recommend the following range of evidence can be used:

- pupil work produced in response to assessment materials provided by the exam board, including groups of questions, past papers or similar materials
- non-exam assessment (NEA) work (often referred to as coursework)
- pupil work produced in centre-devised tasks that reflect the specification, that follow the same format as exam board materials and have been marked in a way that reflects exam board mark schemes - this can include:
 - substantial class or homework
 - internal tests taken by pupils
 - mock exams taken over the course of study
 - records of a pupil's capability and performance over the course of study in performance-based subjects such as music, drama and PE
- records of each pupil's progress and performance over the course of study

Deciding how to balance different sources of evidence

We have been asked to bear in mind the following factors in deciding how to balance different sources of evidence:

- **When the evidence was produced**

The DfE suggest that more recent evidence is likely to be more representative of pupil performance, although there may be exceptions.

- **What pupils were asked to do**

We need to aim to use consistent sources of evidence for a class or cohort that relate closely to the specification requirements.

- **How the evidence was produced**

We need to be confident that work produced is the pupil's own and that the pupil has not been given inappropriate levels of support to complete it, either in the centre, at home or with an external tutor.

Quality assurance

It is important to note that the teacher assessed grades that the school submits are not the responsibility of individual teachers. Following a standardisation process, grades are initially gathered by subject leaders from their team and then checked. They are then submitted to the Senior Leadership Team for further checking. They are then authorised for submission to the exam boards. The exam boards will then run their own quality assurance processes, which may involve contact with schools, before deciding on the final grades.

Submitting grades to exam boards

School must submit all teacher assessed grades, for all subjects, to the exam boards by **Friday 18th June**.

Exam results day

Exam results day will be on **Thursday 12th August 2021** this year. More details about the arrangements for the day will be sent next term.

Appeals

Pupils will have a right to appeal their grades if they believe an obvious error has been made in the grading process. We will issue more information relating to appeals in due course.

Assessments & evidence gathering at Venerable Bede

To ensure that pupils produce the evidence that will allow staff to give them the best grade they deserve, pupils should continue to work hard and steadily for the rest of this year. Each subject team has put together a plan linked to the specific context of their courses. These plans have been carefully designed to ensure sufficient preparation time for any assessments and to help us support pupils in securing the necessary evidence without feeling overwhelmed. Subject staff will compile the evidence materials and grade work using a 'best fit' approach. This means that an unusually low grade for one piece of work is not likely to have a major impact on the final teacher assessed grade. Pupils should try not to panic about whether or not they are doing enough to prepare for every assessment or

worry that every lesson is going to be 'like an exam' staff have been carefully briefed about the requirements of the evidencing process and are here to support. Pupils entitled to 'access arrangements' in examinations will continue to be provided with these in any assessments – further information as to how these will be implemented over the course of the next few weeks will follow.

We recognise that some pupils might find this unique process to be very challenging. If your child is displaying significant anxiety about being able to produce the evidence for their courses, **please don't hesitate to contact school**. The attached article, from the Ofqual blog, may also be a helpful source of information and support for you and your child.

Year 11 Schedule of Assessments (week beginning 12th April)

The following table is a summary of the Year 11 assessments scheduled to take place in the first week after the Easter break. For the majority of pupils, assessments will take place in regular timetabled classrooms - pupils should cross reference the following table with their usual timetable should they need to double check whether an assessment applies to them. **We will send updates each week with details of assessments due to take place in the following week.** Pupils can also find assessment schedules on each of the three 'exam boards' that are situated around school. If pupils have any questions about a listed assessment, they should speak to their class teacher, who will be able to provide subject specific clarification.

Day / Date	Period	Subject	Classes taking assessment
Tues 13 th April	2	English	All Year 11
Wed 14 th April	3	Science	All classes in W band
Wed 14 th April	5	Geography	Mr Crampton's class (11A/Gg1)
Wed 14 th April	5	History	Mrs Scott's class (11A/Hi1)
Wed 14 th April	5	GCSE PE	Mr Atherton's class (11A/Px1)
Wed 14 th April	5	Spanish	Mrs Da Gama's class (11A/Sp1) Mrs Wilson's class (11A/Sp2)
Thurs 15 th April	1	History	Mrs Scott's class (11A/Hi1)
Thurs 15 th April	1	GCSE PE	Mr Atherton's class (11A/Px1)
Thurs 15 th April	3	History	Mrs Tones' class (11C/Hi1) Mrs Kirk's class (11C/Hi2)
Thurs 15 th April	5	Geography	Mr Roberts' class (11B/Gg1)
Thurs 15 th April	5	History	Mrs Scott's class (11B/Hi1)
Thurs 15 th April	5	Spanish	Mrs Rubio's class (11B/Sp1)
Fri 16 th April	1	Maths	All classes in R band
Fri 16 th April	2	Maths	All classes in W band
Fri 16 th April	2	Science	All classes in R band
Fri 16 th April	3	History	Mrs Scott's class (11B/Hi1)
Fri 16 th April	5	Geography	Mrs Pallas' class (11C/Gg1) Mrs Jackson's class (11C/Gg2)
Fri 16 th April	5	History	Mrs Tones' class (11C/Hi1) Mrs Kirk's class (11C/Hi2)
Fri 16 th April	5	Media Studies	Mr MacIntyre's class (11C/Ms2)
Fri 16 th April	5	Spanish	Mrs Rubio's class (11C/Sp1)

The Ofqual blog

Feeling worried about grades this year is understandable. Here are some things that might help...

An article for pupils from Professor Kevin Woods and psychologists at Manchester University. [Posted 30th March 2021]

A few weeks ago, schools and colleges opened their doors again to all pupils. In many ways, it's "back to normal" but some things are still a bit different, especially if you were due to take exams this summer. Last year, we spoke to pupils to help us understand what it might feel like when exams are changed.

Nobody has had a typical school or college experience over the past year. Settling back in to working in a classroom again may feel difficult and you may feel less motivated, or out of practice. Some people may expect you feel relieved or happy that you are not taking "normal" exams this year - you may feel this way, but you may also feel frustrated that you didn't get the chance to prove your abilities, or to have the experience that you expected. This could feel disappointing, annoying, or demotivating.

You may be wondering about your final grades and whether they will be what you would expect. If you prefer classwork to exams, you might be feeling positive about your grades. You may still feel uncertain about what is going to happen about your grades, or feel you haven't been given enough information. Looking ahead, you might be concerned about having missed skills or learning that you think you would have gained if the pandemic hadn't happened.

It is understandable and normal to feel some, or all, of these things at the moment. It will take time to adjust to being back in class, but however you are feeling, some of the following things might help you, or someone you know:

There is always some uncertainty coming up to exams

Although things may have felt more uncertain this year, it might be helpful to remember that this uncertainty is not a new thing – gaining qualifications is always an uncertain process. You never know what questions will come up in exams, how your assessments will go, or how you will be feeling on the day.

Even if you are generally a relaxed person, it's normal to feel more pressure in the weeks leading up to exams and assessments. This is not always a bad thing as some pressure can help people to focus on doing their best. Keeping this in mind can help put worries into perspective and keep you from worrying too much about being too worried!

Take control where you can

It may feel like your grades have been taken out of your hands by exam changes but it's important to remember that you are being assessed based on your own work, and that you still have control over this. Your teachers will do everything necessary to ensure that your grades reflect your own effort and achievements, and any assessments will be based only on the things you have been taught.

There will be careful checking of teacher assessments by schools, colleges, and the exam boards, and it won't just be down to the judgement of one teacher. So, it's important to focus on what you can do now to show the best of your learning over the coming weeks. Focusing on your class work, homework assignments, non-examination assessments, and revision for these will contribute directly to your grades and will help keep anxiety at bay.

Find out what you need to know

Over the next few weeks, your teachers will be explaining the plans for their assessments for your grades. Be confident to ask questions of your teachers and share with them any thoughts you might have about your studies or grades. They have your best interests in mind and will do their best to explain how assessment and grading will work in your school or college.

Our research has shown that pupils feel reassured to find out specifically what tests and assessments will be like, and how exactly to prepare for them. This knowledge gives you the power to take control, so do ask teachers about anything that you are uncertain about. Your questions might be the ones another pupil is thinking about and so hearing the answer may help them too.

Seeing things in perspective

Psychologists have found that the way we think about a situation can affect the way we feel about it. Some of our recent research found that those pupils who kept in mind the reason why exams had to be cancelled, were better able to accept the situation and seemed to feel less upset about it. This year, the UK government asked everybody about the best way to do exams in 2021 and over 50,000 pupils gave their views. The plans that have been made are the best way forward under difficult circumstances, and one of many adaptations that have had to be made across schools, colleges, workplaces and society.

Remember that wherever you are hoping your grades will take you (to college, university, or employment), people understand what has happened. The place you move on to will adapt their plans to take into account missed learning and teacher assessment grades, to ensure that you are not disadvantaged by this year's assessment arrangements.

Actively managing your wellbeing

Looking after your physical, mental and social well-being will help you manage the return to full-time classes and the next few weeks of study and tests. During the recent periods of change, daily routines may have been disrupted. Try to establish, or re-establish, routines in the things that we know keep you healthy such as:

- socialising – spending time with particular friends or family who make us feel happy
- relaxing – whether actively, like playing a game, or passively, like watching a film
- exercising – which can ‘work off’ stress and can get you outdoors too
- eating – keeping mealtimes regular and balancing healthy options with treats
- sleep – for many people ‘bedtimes’ went out of the window in lockdown so reinstating it will help manage the busier days ahead

Different aspects of well-being are important for different people. Some people really need their sleep in order to work well and manage their emotions, and others can manage a few days with less sleep. Other people really feel the need to exercise off excess energy every day, whereas other people manage just as well exercising two or three times a week. The main thing is to be aware of what is important for your well-being and to actively protect that at this time.

Work out what you are worrying about - then make a plan for it

Grades are a gateway to the next stage in your life: to another stage of education, or into training or work. But none of us can perfectly predict our grades, and sometimes people worry about not getting the grades they want and feeling upset, disappointed or embarrassed. If you feel this way, it can help to think about a ‘plan B’ – what you will do if you do not get the grades you are hoping for.

Talking to teachers (or perhaps parents / carers) about your options for retakes, or alternative college or career plans, can relieve stress. This can help parents too who may worry about you putting pressure on yourself. Thinking a little bit about the future can help alleviate stress and anxiety and allow you to concentrate on your studies and tests now, knowing that, whatever the outcomes, your summer grades will be the beginning of a life journey full of possibilities.

If you need help to cope during this uncertain time you can talk to friends, parents or carers, or teachers, or to one of the professional services/ organisations below.

Childline – call 0800 1111

Mind – call 0300 123 3393

Samaritans – call 116 123 or email jo@samaritans.org


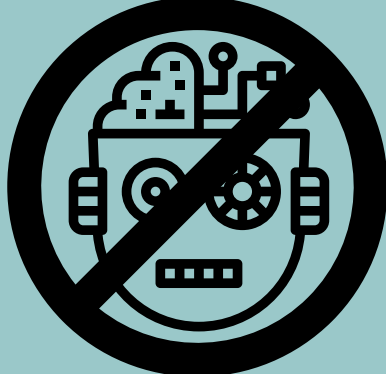






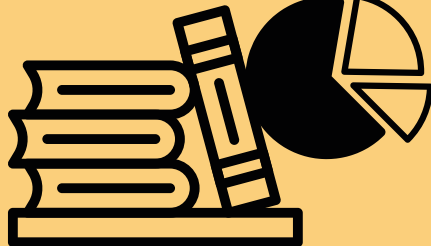

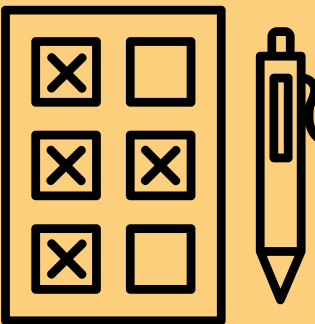
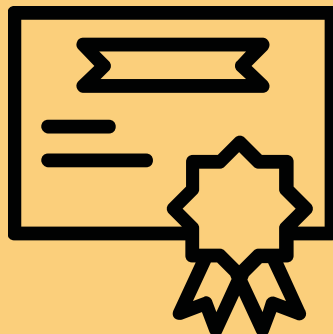


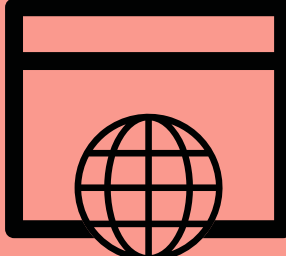
Or call NHS 111 or your GP – they can assist in providing the mental health support you may need

[Prof. Kevin Woods, Dr. Tee McCaldin, Dr. Kerry Brown, Dr. Rob Buck, Dr. Nicola Fairhall, Emma Forshaw and Dr. David Soares.]

How GCSEs, AS and A levels will be awarded in summer 2021



Ofqual/21/6751/2

Working out your grade	Evidence	Results and appeals
<div><div>Graded by teacher judgement</div></div> <div><div>Not graded by an algorithm</div></div> <div><div>School and college assessments can continue</div></div> <div><div>You'll only be assessed on what you've been taught</div></div> <div><div>Your teacher will tell you what evidence is used to grade you</div></div> <div><div>Private candidates to work with a school, college or exam centre to provide evidence for them to be graded</div></div>	<div><div>Mocks, tests and work already done can be used as evidence</div></div> <div><div>Non-exam assessment should continue</div></div> <div><div>Non-exam assessments can be used as evidence even if incomplete</div></div> <div><div>Art & design grade based only on your portfolio</div></div> <div><div>Teachers can use question banks provided by exam boards if they want to</div></div> <div><div>Results will be based on completed and future work, so keep doing your best</div></div>	<div><div><div><div>Results days</div><div>AS and A level 10 August</div><div>GCSE 12 August</div></div></div><div><div>If you're unhappy with your grade, you can appeal it. First step is to submit an appeal to your school or college.</div></div></div> <div><div>You can find out more details from your school, college or exam board, or by visiting the Ofqual website</div><div><div>www.gov.uk/ofqual</div></div></div>