

24 March 2021

Dear Parents / Carers

On 25 February, the government confirmed that students will receive grades awarded and determined by teachers, with students only assessed on what they have been taught. Our teachers will follow the guidelines defined by the Department for Education and the exams' regulator, Ofqual to set grades for GCSEs, A levels, and most other vocational qualifications, such as BTECs. We will also be following The Challenge Academy Trust policy: one that will be used in all academies in the Trust. This gives additional reassurance to students and parents/carers that a robust and fair process is being undertaken. This will ensure your son/daughter is awarded the grades that they have worked hard for. Colleagues from TCAT and other sixth form partner colleges will quality assure various parts of the College process outlined below:

1. Teachers will assess students against a **national standard**; specific guidance will be issued by exam boards by the end of March. We will update you once we have any further details.

2. Each student will have a **portfolio of evidence** that we will be using to inform the final awarded grade. Ofqual recommends that teachers use:

- Students' work based on the exam board's assessment materials, such as practice papers.
- Coursework, even if it's incomplete. Teachers shouldn't penalise students if they haven't completed it because their learning was disrupted.
- Assessments that follow the same format as exam board materials and that are marked in the same way too, such as:
 - Substantial classwork /homework; if students completed it during remote learning (if this is the case, teachers will have to ensure it is the student's own work)
 - Internal tests and Mock exams
 - Records of a student's capability/performance in subjects such as music, drama and PE
- A student's overall progress and performance in a subject.
- AS and A-level art and design subjects: students' grades must be based on the portfolio only, even if they haven't been completed.

3. We have two further **assessment windows**, 19-30 April and from Friday 14 May, where teachers will be conducting assessments in order to add to the portfolio of evidence. These assessments, where available and appropriate, will use materials provided by the exam boards. We are keen to strike a balance for our students, ensuring we create rigorous and meaningful periods of assessment to allow students the opportunity to apply their knowledge but without overwhelming them.

Contd ...

These assessments will take place in familiar spaces - many of which will be in classrooms. Due to capacity issues some of the May assessments could also take place in the LRC and/or the main halls. Teachers will share with students before Easter the **topic areas** for these assessments as well as the type and length of assessment. Please also note these assessments will form only **part of the range** of evidence.

4. No students will be disadvantaged and access arrangements e.g. extra time will be built into future assessments.
5. We will be fully transparent about all the components that will make up the portfolio of evidence. Details will follow after Easter (once we have the details from the exam boards) and these will be shared with students in classes.
6. Alongside quality assuring the portfolio of evidence, there will be a quality assurance process of the awarded grades ensuring they are rigorous and in line with national standards.
7. The overall College results will be quality assured externally by the exam boards, which may include random sampling of our evidence.
8. If the exam boards are confident in our submitted results, then the exam boards will award students their final grades which will be published for AS, A Level and Level 3 vocational courses on 10 August and for GCSE and Foundation (Level 2) courses on 12 August.
9. If students do not think their results are accurate, they will have the right to appeal.

Please note that although teachers will be able to discuss which evidence they are using to inform their judgement with students, we are not allowed to disclose their final submitted grade we give to the exam board. We will make sure that students are aware of where they are 'working at' but students should not attempt to second-guess the final grade submitted, as teachers will be using a range of evidence to inform their final judgement. The final awarded grade is not based on one assessment or one form of evidence and a holistic view is needed.

Whilst we recognise the heightened worry that the announcement to cancel examinations has caused, we trust that members of our Priestley community would not engage in conversations asking teachers to reveal the grades they are submitting, or to increase the grades, as doing so may be considered exam malpractice. Our teachers are already using their professional expertise to assess students on the content they have been taught.

We are delighted with the way students have returned to College and the way they have re-adjusted to the Covid-safe routines around campus and in lessons. The effort and commitment they have demonstrated over the course of this year is excellent and testament to them and the support received from their families. The best advice to students now is to attend lessons and learn, act on feedback from their teachers, revise and read around their subject.

We will be publishing a series of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's) from Monday 29 March on the College website. These will give you further detail and provide the reassurance that your son/daughter needs. Information will continue to be updated and communicated to students and families to ensure we do all we can to support you at this time. Please email: assessmentquery@priestley.ac.uk for any questions that may arise. We also have a dedicated email for students, parents or carers who may have specific welfare concerns: studentwelfare@priestley.ac.uk

Please do not hesitate to get in touch as questions arise. I leave you with this advice from Simon Lebus, Ofqual Interim Chief Regulator:

"Our message to students is this: please continue to engage as fully as you can in your education... This will put you in the best position, whatever arrangements are made for your qualifications. It's important that teachers and students can focus on the knowledge and skills needed to equip students to progress to the next stage, whatever form that might take"

Yours sincerely



George Contos

Vice Principal – Curriculum & Standards