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Dear Parent and Student

I am writing to all students and parents in Year 11 and Year 13 in our trust secondary schools about the awarding of grades this summer.

I understand the concern and anxiety that many students are feeling right now, given the continuing uncertainty about exactly how this will happen. The Department for Education and Ofqual (the exams' regulator) announced the very broad principles of their approach on 25 February, and this was followed early this week with the publication of a draft guidance document which you can read here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/965648/6749-3_Summer_2021_GQs_-_Info_for_Heads_of_Centre.pdf

It is really important for you to know that final guidance has still not been provided to schools and therefore it is not yet possible to give you a final plan.

School leaders are working hard on a range of possible approaches and as soon as we have the final guidance and the rules we must follow, we will be in a position to give you our final plan. It is enormously frustrating that students are coming back to school next week, but they have not been told exactly how grading will work. Our students deserve better than this and we are joining organisations such as the Association of School and College Leaders in pushing for the final guidance to be released.

I fully understand why students and parents across the country are contacting schools to ask important questions about how all of this will work, and I am very sorry that we are in a position where we cannot answer all these questions. The moment we can, I can assure you we will.

In the meantime, I want to share with you some of the most important points relating to the award of grades, that are in the draft guidance that I think are likely to underpin the final guidance:

- The grades submitted to exam boards must reflect a fair, reasonable and carefully considered judgement of the student's performance across a range of evidence, on the curriculum content they have been taught.
- As part of their overall quality assurance, centres should consider the grades for this year's cohort compared to cohorts from previous years when exams have taken place.
- Centres will be asked to make a holistic judgement of each student's performance on a range of evidence.



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- Centres should be confident that work produced is the student's own and that the student has not been given inappropriate levels of support, either in the centre, at home or with an external tutor.

At the end of the process, the Headteacher in the school will be required to state: "I am satisfied that each student's grade is based on an appropriately broad range of evidence, and is their own work".

I am sorry that schools have not been given final guidance by Ofqual and that, as a consequence of that, schools cannot provide parents and students with the information they need and deserve. I can assure you that we are working hard, and will continue to work hard, to develop processes that will treat every student fairly and will ensure that none of our students are disadvantaged by not taking exams. I can absolutely assure you that we will not base results entirely on work or assessments students have already done and all students will have ample further opportunities to demonstrate what they know and what they can do.

Once Ofqual publishes its final guidance, your school will be in touch with you the moment our plans are finalised. In the meantime, teachers and leaders are not able to answer queries about the process or individual students' possible outcomes. The main focus for our students' return to school should be on continuing to work hard, completing all work set and doing as their teachers ask.

Wishing all the very best to you and your families.

Yours faithfully,

Jonny Uttley
CEO



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