



# BORDEN GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Borden Grammar School  
Avenue of Remembrance  
Sittingbourne  
ME10 4DB

31 March 2021

Dear Y11 /Y13 Parents and Carers,

Last Friday afternoon the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) released a significant document containing information about the forthcoming awarding of GCSE and A Level grades. This new guidance has impacted upon decisions and time frames we sent out to you only last week. At the time of writing this, schools still have not received the packs of assessment material, recommended to be used by schools after Easter and we are aware that this situation is frustrating for students and parents alike.

As a result of this publication, we will now be implementing the following process and draw your attention to the summary of key points.

### **What are the exam board assessments?**

These are papers shortly to be released by the exam boards. From 24<sup>th</sup> March, all work is to be kept as evidence. There is an expectation that the exam board assessments will be included within a student's portfolio of evidence.

### **The exam boards are only giving out past papers, how is this fair?**

Most of the assessments provided by the exam boards will be drawn from past papers, although there will be new questions as well. There is significant research that even if students have seen assessment questions before, it does not reduce the validity of the assessment. Furthermore, exam board questions are only one of the many pieces of evidence we will use to assess students this summer.

### **When will they be taken?**

Where students are sitting the same exam board assessments for each subject, this will be on the same day to maximise fairness. This, in particular, has caused the largest area of concern for us as a centre. The implications of this directive is that some subjects cannot accommodate this on the existing school timetable and so, through sheer necessity, we will have to facilitate some of the exam board assessments by scheduling students to complete them in the Gym - an area that can accommodate this volume of classes/ whole cohort. Whilst exam board assessments may be taking place throughout the period up to submission, the window where students may need to take these in the gym will be from Monday 26<sup>th</sup> April. A timetable will be provided so students know on which days each subject's assessments will be.

### **Are these 'exams by stealth'?**

Whilst it may seem that this approach is 'exams by stealth', it is important to reiterate that these assessments are not examinations. They are one strand of evidence that schools are encouraged to use in order to include in students' portfolios of evidence. Assessments that contribute towards final grades have already taken place and will continue to take place afterwards.

### **What support can staff give to students?**

Staff will not be able to advise students on the specific content of any upcoming assessment. Only general guidance may be given. Students will be expected to use their candidate numbers instead of their names (we can reissue these if a student has forgotten their number). This is part of the internal quality assurance process to maximise fairness.



Headteacher: Mr A Tomlin MA NPQH



### **How important are these assessments after Easter?**

The documentation makes clear that no one type of evidence takes precedence in a student's portfolio - however it does also state that more recent evidence/assessments are more likely to be representative of a student's performance, being near the end of the course. We are therefore keen to ensure these exam board assessments prove fruitful for students.

### **What if a student misses one of their final assessments?**

There are many possible reasons why a student may find themselves unable to attend one of their final assessments, whether due to temporary illness, temporary injury or some other event outside of a student's control. Where possible, we will arrange another time for them to complete the assessment. However, due to the shortened time frame of the assessment period, this may be tricky. If completing the assessment at another time is not possible, teachers will refer to other sources of evidence when assessing their final grade.

### **What will the evidence used look like?**

Portfolios of evidence should be holistic and can include evidence of different types from across the course of study. The expectation is that schools should aim to use consistent sources of evidence for a class or cohort that relate closely to the specification requirements. Should there be significant reasons why students have missed assessments, then there is flexibility to substitute in other evidence but this must be documented and justified to the exam board.

### **What will students be doing after completing their exam board assessments?**

Some exam board assessments will take place in lesson times over a number of weeks. Since we want students to have every opportunity to prove their potential, students will continue to complete other in-class assessments throughout May. These will be a vital strand of evidence in their portfolios alongside other forms of assessment.

### **Will students know their final grade?**

Once staff have marked and moderated the evidence within portfolios, this evidence will be shared with students. However, the guidance is clear that we cannot tell a student the final grade we are putting forward to the exam board. We are only allowed to show them the evidence that informs that grade. Students should not attempt to second-guess the grade submitted, as teachers will be using a range of evidence to inform their final judgement. Students must not pressure teachers to reveal the grades they are submitting, or to increase the grades, as doing so may be considered exam malpractice.

### **What should students do to improve their grades?**

The best thing students can do is to continue to attend classes, learn, act on feedback from their teachers, revise, and read around their subject. Their grade will be based on their performance, and so their outcomes are ultimately in their hands.

### **When will year 11 and 13 be able to leave school?**

Whilst not mentioned in the documentation provided by JCQ, the DfE has suggested that Year 11 may need to remain in school even after the submission of grades on 18<sup>th</sup> June. This is still subject to change and we will keep students informed as we learn more.

### **Can we appeal against grades if we disagree?**

If you appeal, the school has to check that we followed our processes which have been agreed with the exam board. That is all we look at. If we had not followed our own processes, the grade would be reassessed in accordance with the processes. If we had followed our processes, then the grade will stand and you would then have to appeal to the examination board. At all stages of appeal, grades may go down as well as up. We will provide further information about our appeals process at a later point.

### What should students be doing over Easter?

The half term that lies ahead is an important one. For students, this means that Easter should involve plenty of preparation and revision. Whilst there are no official exams this year, the next half term will be crucial to providing the evidence needed to support the grade submitted. In terms of revision, research evidence suggests that students need to think carefully about how to revise. Below is a list of five things to help them, so please do talk to them about this and support them in the process.

Do	Don't
Actively revise with questions and answers	Just read your notes over and over
Use flashcards to test yourself	Highlight lots of notes
Interleave revision (go back to it)	Revise a subject only once and think it's done
Spend 40 mins revising, then take a break	Try to revise for over an hour non stop
Organise your revision into 'chunks'	Try to revise whole topics at once

I realise this is a great deal of information to process, but hope you understand why it is important to keep you fully informed. If you have any further concerns regarding any subjects or general advice, please do contact your teachers or Head of Year if you need further support.

Yours faithfully,



**Ashley Tomlin**  
**Headteacher**