



15<sup>th</sup> October 2021

Dear Parents/carers

Ahead of the end of term and following the exam regulator (Ofqual) and the Department for Education publishing information about how exams will work in 2022, I felt an update would be appropriate. The recent publications included information about adaptations to exams to accommodate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education, the standards which will be used to grade examinations in 2022, results days, and contingency plans in case the pandemic further disrupts education this year.

## Adaptations to exams

Ofqual and the Department for Education have recognised that the pandemic has significantly impacted the educational experience of students over the past two years.

To take account of this, the following adaptations will be made to examinations in 2022:

- **GCSE English literature, history, and geography:** there will be optional topic and content for these qualifications. This means that certain topics, normally on the specification for assessment, will not be required for the exams in 2022. At Nailsea this will be:  
**GCSE English literature:** the 19<sup>th</sup> century prose will not be assessed (*A Christmas Carol*)  
**GCSE history:** Paper 1, Medicine Through Time will not be assessed  
**GCSE geography:** topic on Resource Resilience will not be assessed
- **GCSE and A-level art and design:** students taking GCSE, AS and A level art and design will be assessed on their portfolio only, with no final examination.
- **All other GCSE, AS and A-level subjects:** exam boards will provide advanced information about the focus of the intent of exams for all GCSE, AS and A-level subjects except GCSE English literature, history, and geography **by 7 February 2022** at the latest. This is normally the time by which the majority of courses of study have been completed, and teaching turns to exam preparation and revision. This adaptation means that teachers and candidates will know which topics will and won't come up in the exams in the summer, enabling revision to focus just on those aspects which will be assessed. The attached pdf document provides further information regarding this process.
- **Formula sheets:** students will be given a formula sheet for GCSE mathematics and a revised equation sheet for GCSE physics and combined science. This means that they will not need to memorise so many formulae and equations in preparation for the exams – although they will still need to know how and when to use them correctly.

Overall this is a reasonable and fair set of adaptations to take account of pandemic disruption. It will relieve pressure on the intensive revision period through the spring, enabling students and their teachers to focus on the content they will need for their exams in the summer.

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## **Grading standards**

There has been much discussion about what standard will be used to assess examinations in 2022. The “standard” essentially means deciding how many candidates should receive each grade in each subject – how many “A” grades, “B” grades and so on there should be (or the equivalent numerical grades at GCSE). A significantly higher number of candidates achieved the top grades nationally in 2020 and 2021 under the Centre Assessed Grades and Teacher Assessed Grades systems used in place of exams, than achieved top grades the last time exams were sat (in 2019).

Ofqual has announced that it intends to get back to how grading was before the pandemic. However, to recognise the disruption from the pandemic, they won't do it in one jump. Instead, 2022 will be a transition year to reflect that we are in a pandemic recovery period. The standard set by Ofqual for 2022 will reflect a point midway between 2021 and 2019 when it comes to grading, before returning in 2023 to results that are in line with those before the pandemic began.

This is a reasonable compromise, with a return to normal exam standards preceded by a transition year which recognises the disruption caused by COVID-19. It means that more top grades will be available to students in 2022 than was the case in 2019, or than will be the case in 2023. All students, across England, will be competing across the same exam papers to achieve those grades.

We do not yet know what this midway point between 2021 and 2019 will look like on a subject-by-subject basis. Exam boards will use data as a starting point, to align their standards in a subject. But the grade boundaries for each subject will be set by the senior examiners after they have reviewed the work produced by students in their exams – these boundaries will not be available to teachers or to candidates in advance.

## **Results Days**

Results days will be on:

- Thursday 18th August 2022: AS, A-level and other level 3 qualifications
- Thursday 25th August 2022: GCSE and other level 2 qualifications

Further details about the format of these days will be released nearer the time.

## **Contingency Plans**

The government is drawing up contingency plans in case exams cannot proceed in summer 2022 as planned. The current proposals are that Teacher Assessed Grades would again be used, but with much clearer guidance on the kinds of evidence that could be used to support the teacher assessment. This is likely to be based around mock exams in the majority of subjects.

Although we hope and expect that exams will go ahead as planned in 2022, all examination candidates, especially those in Year 11 and 13, should prepare for their mock exams as though they were the real thing. Not only will this provide a good evidence base in case of further disruption, but it will put students at a significant advantage in terms of revision and preparation for the summer.

## Revision advice

The announcements this term confirm the plan is for exams to go ahead in 2022, with some additional support to recognise the disruption to education that students have experienced.

Our message to students and families would therefore be this:

- exams are going ahead.
- You know what you need to revise, and you will be able to focus on this even more as you approach the summer.
- Listen to the feedback you get from your teachers.
- Use the revision techniques that you have been given and that will continue to be provided throughout the year.
- Don't leave it all until the last minute: you should be revising consistently, a little and often, throughout this year.
- Students should use tutor time effectively, seeking support and completing key revision tasks.
- Keep a sense of balance and proportion: these exams are important, and we know they really matter, but you also need to look after yourselves.
- Make sure you are taking regular breaks, maintaining your leisure activities, and talking to someone you trust if you are struggling.

As has been the case for these students over the last 5 or 7 years, we want them all to achieve the best possible results, whilst staying healthy and happy. Please be assured we will do everything we can to support them and you with this.

Take care and Be Kind

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dee Elliott". The signature is written in black ink and is underlined.

Mrs Dee Elliott  
Head teacher