

Awarding Grades 2021

Because of the disruption to on site education over the last year the government announced in January that qualification grades should be awarded based on assessments set and marked by schools.

We have set out a clear and robust process for doing this at Thomas Gainsborough School. When Ofsted visited the school in 2017 they recognised that “Pupils are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage of their education or employment”, and this focus on successful and fair student progression remains at the heart of our planning. Because of our successful implementation of the 2020 process, our strong exams performance in previous years and the rigorous routine assessments that we make on student progress throughout each year we are confident that students will all receive fair and positive recognition of their achievements.

After providing a copy of our assessment plans to the awarding bodies, we will provide a Teacher Assessed Grade (TAG) for each student and every qualification that they were due to complete this summer. This includes vocational qualifications. These grades will be with the awarding bodies by 18 June.

Our decisions will be made based on a wide range of moderated evidence from the two years leading up to summer 2021. Depending on the subject this evidence could include coursework, portfolios of work, practical assessments, mock exams, internal tests, and groups of questions set in lessons in test conditions.

Typically this will be historic evidence, such as exams from the first year of the course, for example Year 10 March exams, September assessments and November mocks and then a bank of ‘fresh evidence’ from assessments after Easter. To help spread the assessments for students and marking for staff some core subjects will start assessments just before and just after Easter. The bulk of the fresh assessments will be made during the 3 weeks from Tuesday 4 May. SEND concessions will also be made.

The assessments will only cover the content taught to students over the last two years and takes account of any amendments to the assessed content made by awarding bodies. For example in some subjects the amount of practical assessment required may have been reduced and more choice in topics assessed may have been introduced. These adaptations are expected to be in place for qualifications awarded in 2022.

Throughout the period of assessment, moderation and judgement there will be a close check made on judgments in relation to the predictions made by staff in December 2020, students target grades and the grades needed to support progression to college, A Levels, university, apprenticeships and employment.

As well as our internal checks we will work with other schools delivering the same qualifications and awarding body within and beyond the trust. These cross school discussions will consider the evidence base, process and quality of marking in each subject and further strengthen our relationships with other schools and our position as a leading school within the Trust.

To ensure reasonable parity with previous and future cohorts results we will track the impact on the schools Attainment 8 measure, which in 2019 was an average grade of 4.8, in 2020 was 5.0 and for 2021 was predicted in November to be 4.9. Our targets for students this year, if fully met, would have given an Attainment 8 average grade of 5.1.

Our plans have been presented to the Trust and have been accepted as a strong model.

There is also a sampling process by awarding bodies following the submission of grades in June where samples of evidence may be requested.

The dates for releasing grades to students have been moved to 10 and 12 August, for A Levels and GCSE.

As always, our focus will remain on the students individual progress and high quality support, guidance and reassurance will be provided by teachers, tutors, pastoral staff, learning support team, careers team and school leaders. We are confident of positive and honest outcomes for all students.