



To aspire, endeavour and thrive together

Dear Parents, Carers and Year 11 Students,

Firstly, thank you to all the Year 11 students who tuned in for Friday afternoon's Google Meet. It was great to 'see' so many students and to be able to let them all know the latest information and arrangements.

As always, this is subject to change, but there have been important developments - both nationally and within the school - that we'd like to make you aware of.

Consultation on awarding GCSE and 'A' Level grades

Firstly, you will be aware that the government announced on 4th January that external GCSE and 'A' Level exams in Summer 2021 would be cancelled as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic but have yet to finalise the precise details for how students will receive fair grades. The Department for Education and Ofqual are consulting with teachers, parents and students on how grades for GCSE and vocational qualifications should be awarded.

The proposals were published last Friday (15th January) and, as a parent of a Year 11 student, or a Year 11 student yourself, I strongly urge you to review them and respond with your views. This is your opportunity to have a say in shaping the way that qualifications will be awarded and verified.

Here is the link to the consultation:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/953000/6743-1_GCSE_AS_and_A_level_grades_should_be_awarded_in_summer_2021.pdf

These are the principal proposals:

- students would continue with their education during this academic year
- students would be assessed by their teachers in a period beginning in May into early June
- teachers would submit grades to the exam boards by mid-June
- external quality assurance by the exam boards would be ongoing throughout June
- results would be issued to students once the QA process is complete, most likely in early July
- student appeals could be submitted immediately following the issue of results and would first be considered by schools and colleges

I have summarised the detail in the attached sheet with the aim of simplifying and shortening a lengthy document, I hope you find it helpful. If you wish to ask any questions of us, please can you email examqueries@glossopdale.school. Respondents have until Friday 29th January at 23:45 to put forward their views.



BTEC Exams

The government announced last week that BTEC exams in February and March were cancelled; you will have received a letter if this affects your child.

On Friday, they also announced that BTEC exams for Summer 2021 will not go ahead, however they have yet to announce precise details for the arrangements. This affects Year 11 students who study Business, Dance, Drama, Sport, Catering and Health. There has been a reduction in the internal (non-examined) assessment for some subjects; we will send out specific details of how this changes some courses.

For some vocational qualifications, some form of teacher assessment will replace exams for the qualifications, in line with the proposals for GCSE, AS and A levels. Some learners certificating in summer 2021 will be carrying forward calculated results from summer 2020. These results will be used in arriving at a final grade in the summer.

No announcement has yet been made regarding the Cambridge Technical and National Exams. For Year 11s, this relates to the IMedia course. We will update parents and students when we know more.

Remote Mock Exams

Following consultation with staff members and discussion with Year 11 students, we have organised a series of remote mock exams to take place this term. As you know, Year 11 students would have been sitting their mock exams in school this week. Mock exams are a critical component of every student's journey towards the end of their key stage for a number of reasons: they help teachers identify students' strengths and gaps; they help students organise their time - both in revision and in the exams themselves; they prepare students for study in Further and Higher Education; they also provide purpose and motivation to learn, revise, revisit and solidify their knowledge in each of their subjects.

Although we cannot offer in school exams this term, we feel it is important to meet some of those needs listed above as well as providing the opportunity to provide a piece of evidence towards students' final grades.

In the weeks commencing 1st and 8th February, students will be asked to sit remote mock exams in English, Maths and Science. These will be uploaded to Google Classroom and timed to allow students a strict timeframe in which they can complete the exam. The exam will be removed at the end of each session and students' responses will not be accepted at that point.

We will send out specific instructions nearer the time, and subject teachers will communicate with students as to which topics they need to revise, and which papers they will sit. We ask that parents support this process by ensuring that students have access to a quiet, uninterrupted space at each of these times, free of resources that would not be permitted in an exam (eg. dictionaries, text books, mobile phones). Where possible, please limit the students to the time allowed on the exam and monitor internet use to avoid plagiarism.



To aspire, endeavour and thrive together

Some students and parents will be concerned that there will be inconsistency in the approach to exams between students. It is certainly true that we cannot ensure the same rigour that would take place in an exam hall. However, we are inviting the students to demonstrate their trustworthiness and maturity in completing these honestly, fairly and conscientiously. Any plagiarism will be dealt with seriously (and is always very quickly and easily picked up on by teachers).

Please see the timetable below:

Week commencing 1st February

Day	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Exam	English Literature (Step-Up English: for students not studying Literature)	Science: Biology	Maths: Paper 1	No exams: students complete work for their options subject lessons	Science: Chemistry
Exam length	1 hour 45 mins (Step-Up 1 hour 30 mins)	Trilogy: 1 hour, Separate Science: 1 hour 15 mins	1 hour 30 mins		Trilogy: 1 hour, Separate Science: 1 hour 15 mins
Time exam available	9am-12noon	9am-12noon	9am-12noon		9am-12noon

Week commencing 8th February

Day	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Exam	Maths: Paper 2	No exams: students complete work for their options subject lessons	Science: Physics	No exams: students complete work for their options subject lessons	Maths: Paper 3
Exam length	1 hour 30 mins		Trilogy: 1 hour, Separate Science: 1 hour 15 mins		1 hour 30 mins
Time exam available	9am-12noon		9am-12noon		9am-12noon

During this time, no additional work will be set for English, Maths and Science. Students should spend their time outside of these exams revising and completing work for their options subjects.



To aspire, endeavour and thrive together

Depending on the date of students' return to face-to-face teaching, we will conduct a second series of remote mocks for options subjects. We will also arrange in-school mock exams once the students return to school.

We know that students are worried about the process, about their grades and their next steps for post-16. This is understandable and we share all of those frustrations. However, we will respond positively and professionally to the arrangements once they are announced and keep both parents and students fully informed of what we are doing, how and why, so that you can feel confident that the process is fair, robust and transparent.

While the consultation takes place, and until the results are published, we expect all students to complete their studies as usual. The proposals above anticipate that all non-examined assessments will be completed and marked and therefore students should proceed on this basis. Examined assessments are likely to look very different, however, they will be a crucial component of a teacher assessed grade and therefore students should continue as they would if the exams had not been cancelled.

What is widely regarded as a U-turn by the government is likely to create confusion and skepticism and this combined with wider worries and disillusionment can lead to fear and disengagement. However, what I cannot stress enough is that students did not arrive at Glossopdale School in Year 7 in order to 'pass exams'. They joined in order to be part of a community, to learn and thrive with others - both academically and emotionally - and to leave with a broad and solid set of knowledge and skills to help them pursue their chosen path in life. These aims remain.

Thank you for your time and understanding.

Best wishes,

Mrs. McGloin