

## How Will Qualifications Be Awarded in Summer 2021 ?

Last Summer saw exam chaos with mutant algorithms, protests on the streets, and a dramatic climb-down by Minister of Education, Gavin Williamson, in the face of fury over unfair exam results.

The slogan 'Trust Our Teachers' was all over the news but we are very conscious that this tends to be the case until someone gets a lower grade they did not expect. It is at this point that the 'trust' element can become something else.



Consequently, we want to be crystal clear on how things are going to run through, crystal clear on what you can expect over your child's last weeks in school, and crystal clear that our judgements will be determined in a fair and a balanced way.

### How does OFQUAL want grades decided ?

The DfE have announced that Year 11 and Year 13 students will be given final grades based on teacher judgements. There will be no formal end of year exams.

Instead all schools have to follow the same OFQUAL (the exam regulator) guidance and have to match up to the same internal and external quality assurance processes. It is these processes that will ensure that students face as fair a system as is possible.

The logo for OFQUAL, consisting of the word 'ofqual' in a lowercase, sans-serif font. The letters 'o' and 'f' are dark grey, while 'q', 'u', 'a', and 'l' are a lighter grey. Below the letters 'a' and 'l' are two horizontal green bars of equal length, one under each letter.

All teacher grades must be evidence-based so there is no allowance for imagining how a student could or could not have performed in an exam. Clearly, whatever grade a student receives could have been different if they had actually sat the exam. It could have been higher, it could have been lower. Nonetheless, with where we are it is about schools reviewing a bank of evidence and forming a balanced judgement.

OFQUAL are clear that schools must judge the grade "based on a range of evidence". This evidence can only be on the subject content taught so there is no guess work on what might have happened in a missed unit. This means teachers will weigh up completed work, mock exams, homework, tests, etc, to form a holistic judgement.

Those subjects where there is coursework element require students to keep working on this until they leave school and this work will form part of the final judgement.

The Exam Boards will review school results to check they are broadly in line with performance from previous exam cohorts. Teachers will sign a declaration to say that they have been assessed fairly and accurately. The Head of Centre will sign a declaration to say that correct procedures have been followed in accordance with the guidance.

You can read the full OFQUAL guidance via: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/how-qualifications-will-be-awarded-in-2021>.

## What grades will my child get ?

The obvious question you may want to ask is 'What will my child get in X ?'. Well, the simple answer is that we cannot tell you.

The final judgement can only be revealed on Results Day as we have to take into account all the evidence until your child leaves school and the respective Exam Boards will review our judgements too.

Even so, you already have a very strong idea on what your child will get through their reports. Every report we give you has a predicted grade on them. We have been giving you predicted grades since Year 7 and as we reach the end of the courses these become more and more accurate.

**We have enclosed your child's report grades from this school year with this information guide.**

The most recent predicted grades are based on all work that we have covered in the 38 weeks of Year 10 and the 15 weeks of the Autumn Term. This is a total of 53 weeks evidence and we have the recent lockdown and around 10 weeks or so left to factor in.

OFQUAL want us to ensure "teaching and learning can continue for as long as possible" so the remaining time will include new topics and assessments. This evidence will be added to the overall judgement and help form the final grade. This means that the last few weeks should be viewed as an opportunity to improve a grade - or alternatively a risk of a slip to see a grade fall - but there is no certainty either way.

Undoubtedly, it is important to be realistic on where your child is heading and to look carefully at the facts in their current predicted grades. The following examples may help with this.

### EXAMPLE 1 - Y11 STUDENT

Recently, a parent contacted us to say their child was getting a Grade 5 in GCSE History but they should get a Grade 7 by the Summer. We replied this was possible, though unlikely.

We explained if they have been consistently been judged on a '5' on Nazi Germany and a '5' on Elizabethan England, then even if they are a '6' in 'Sport & Leisure' in the coming weeks, it would not mean they were a '6' overall.

Moreover, it will be professional judgement to determine whether a '5' or '6' is awarded. In fact, you could make an argument either way and both views could be valid. Even so, the subject teacher is the expert, they remove the emotion from the debate, they look at all the evidence, and they are making the professional call based on experience of how the student has performed overall.

There could be a disagreement here - but there would be no real validity to change the decision either way.

### EXAMPLE 2 - Y13 STUDENT

Some time ago, we spoke to a parent who was disappointed that their child had received a Grade D in their A-Level. They were adamant it should have been a B. We checked it and the child had been given a D on every one of their three Y13 reports. The parent and student had been told all along they would get a D, but when they got that D, they felt it was wholly unacceptable.

The parent pointed to a mock grade that was a C. They argued that this C would have been the indicator that the grade should be higher. The problem with this is that mock exams are not a valid assessment to base a judgement on alone. The mock will never cover the whole course so it cannot be an entire judgement.

Equally, the purpose of our mock exams is less to assess and more to learn. Often we tell students the topics they are covering, the types of questions, how to answer them, and we go over the specific content just beforehand. With this level of support they cannot be an entirely credible reflection.

Consequently, we explained to the parent that the mock result was factored into the predicted grade on the report. It had been weighted into the evidence and it did not swing it to a C (or B). The D grade stood.

Essentially, we would suggest you review with your child where they currently sit with their grades and then look forward to the remaining school time and how it can be best used to succeed.

## What happens for the remainder of Year 11 and Year 13 ?

We have directed our Subject Leaders to plan out the remaining weeks in terms of course content and assessments. This is so we can make the most of the teaching time we have left and be very specific on what assessments your child will have in their final weeks.

To ensure full transparency, we will publish the assessment schedules for every subject on the school website in W/B 22 March so check out the following pages under the Home tab:

Year 11 - <https://www.friaryschool.com/y11-grades-2021>

Year 13 - <https://www.friaryschool.com/y13-grades-2021>

These assessment tasks will be a mixture of things; they could be an exam question on a set topic; a sample from an Exam Board task; a traditional test; a specific homework task; a practical activity; etc.

These assessments will be carefully designed to teach new content and judge knowledge and skills. On the assessment schedules you will see all the details, such as how much of the course they relate to (weighting) and what support materials were used to teach your child. These factors influence us in how much they affect our final grade judgement.



Again, it is vital to put these assessments into the overall context of things. They do not decide the final grade but they do partly inform the final judgement. If one goes wrong it is not the end of the world - it does not mean that the grade will certainly drop. Conversely, if one goes really well then it does not mean that the final grade will certainly rise.

Naturally, all of these assessments will be carefully checked and we are fortunate to have a lot of experienced teachers and qualified examiners across the school. They are highly trained to judge the merits of each individual piece of work and can ensure it matches with Exam Board standards.

Elsewhere, those children with access arrangements will be offered them where appropriate to ensure that no child is disadvantaged. Finally, if your child misses an assessment because they are absent then we cannot guarantee they will be able to catch it up as we are on a tight timeframe to cover everything. If they do miss it then it will not count against them. It will simply mean it is one piece of evidence that cannot be added to their overall judgement.

## When are the Results Days ?

The Results Days are as follows:

- Year 13 - Tuesday 10 August
- Year 11 - Thursday 12 August

We will give precise details on the timings in the weeks ahead and if it turns out you are away for these dates then please let us know - via [exams2021@friaryschool.co.uk](mailto:exams2021@friaryschool.co.uk) - and we will make alternative arrangements to contact you.

## What happens if you disagree with a final grade ?

You do have a route to take if you disagree with the grade your child has been awarded but it is important to be aware of what evidence there is to justify your view. The information in this guide should illustrate to you how the grades will be determined fairly and accurately.

Your first step would be to contact the school - via [exams2021@friaryschool.co.uk](mailto:exams2021@friaryschool.co.uk) - and ask for a check on whether an administrative error has been made in informing the Exam Board of your child's grade. This will be very unlikely but at that time we will readily explain the decision-making behind the judgement.

If this does not satisfy your concern, then the school can be asked to appeal to the Exam Board on behalf of your child. The Exam Board will then ask us to provide them with the evidence on how we reached that grade - which we will have already told you - and they will then decide either to support our judgement or change the grade. They can move the grade up or down at this point.

We are absolutely confident that our processes will be robust and that the Exam Boards will consider our judgements accurate and fair. We will provide them with a summary of key evidence and explain how we moderate / review the judgements to ensure they are quality assured. Our judgements, and the Exam Board's judgements, will be based solely on factual evidence, like Examples 1 and 2 herein, so debates on what might have happened in the real exam, one mock result, or a gut feeling, will not hold sway.

We spend each and every day trying to help your child be successful and there is no desire to treat anyone unfairly. We can guarantee you that every grade will be considered very carefully, checked repeatedly, and be a fair and solid judgement when it goes off to the Exam Board.

## What if I have questions on this process ?

We are staging a Facebook Live broadcast where you can send in questions advance - via [exams2021@friaryschool.co.uk](mailto:exams2021@friaryschool.co.uk) - or ask them on the night via Facebook. We will talk through the process and give examples to illustrate points. This virtual event will take place on Thursday 25 March at 6.00pm on the @friaryschool Facebook page and we will send out details nearer the time.

You can also email in general enquires to [exams2021@friaryschool.co.uk](mailto:exams2021@friaryschool.co.uk) and we will always get back to you. We will also talk through the process with your child in special assemblies in W/B 15 March.

## Other Information

We will endeavour to maintain as many of the end of school year traditions as are possible though much will depend on the government's lifting of COVID restrictions.

The Year 11 Leavers Assembly will happen, the Year 11 Prom is booked in, the Year 13 Leavers events are also in the diary, and so on.

We will keep you posted on precise details so hold fire on the fake tan and stretch limo just for now.

Naturally, all such events are invitation-only so a strong focus and positive attitude until the end of the school year are vital to ensure attendance.



Finally, we do not have final confirmation from the DfE on your child's leaving date but rest assured when we have details we will get them straight to you.

