

Tuesday 21st July 2020

Dear Parent and Carers

I hope that you and your families are safe and well.

As a staff body, we are really disappointed that we haven't been able to see everyone again before the end of the academic year to say our farewells in the ways we are used to. We appreciate that this has been a particularly upsetting time for students who were due to sit their public exams and that there is some anxiety amongst students who feel that they haven't been able to prove what they could achieve in their GCSEs and A Levels this summer.

I wanted to share with you what the exams process has been at school, as far as we could control things, and how the awarding bodies control the grades that your children will receive in August. Ofqual (the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation) have governed how the whole examinations process had to be carried out in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic. We hope that all students will receive the grades they deserve, and which most importantly allow them to proceed on to their next stage of education, employment or training.

With the above in mind, I feel that our Year 11 cohort are in a strong place, knowing that, regardless of the processes that the awarding organisations use, we are in a strong position to know the true ability of your children and their suitability for our sixth form courses.

I hope you will find the below information useful. If you have any remaining questions, please don't hesitate to email enquiries@tretherras.net

Centre Assessed Grades – Process and Appeals

Following the cancellation of the summer exam and assessment period, centres were asked to provide **Centre Assessed Grades** for students in order for the Awarding Organisations to award qualification grades for students. The relevant documentation on this process can be found [here](#).

In summary, the process for awarding grades this year is:

1. The **school put forward a Centre Assessed Grade (CAG)**, and **rank order** of students within grades, to the exam board (Awarding Organisation)
2. The **Awarding Organisation** adjusts the CAGs if it thinks the centre has been too generous or harsh, at a subject level, and produces a **Calculated Grade**. The rank order does not change.
3. The **Calculated Grade** is published to students and is treated as a qualification in exactly the same way as if the exams had been taken.
4. Students can sit an **exam** in the Autumn (or in another exam period) and both Calculated Grade and exam grade will be valid.

Appeals against the Centre Assessed Grade or Calculated Grade.

- A. **The school can appeal to the Awarding Organisation** if we believe there has been an error in the process of awarding the Calculated Grade. The school will check that the rank order has been preserved and that any adjustments made look reasonable in relation to the guidance laid out by Ofqual. The Awarding Body must provide the school with details of the process followed to make any adjustments.

- B. **Students can raise a concern** with the school if they believe the CAG was calculated in a biased or discriminatory way, and that teachers did not behave with integrity or care during the process. Students cannot appeal against the professional judgement of the teachers in the awarding of the grade itself, and cannot request a review or second opinion of that grade.

Ofqual information relating to Appeals following the release of the Calculated Grades can be found [here](#). Please read this in full before contacting the school if you have any concerns over the awarding of grades. The link also explains the nature of the Autumn exam series which students can enter if they wish to improve on the grades they have been awarded. AS and A-level exams will take place between October 5th and October 23rd, and GCSEs will go ahead between November 2nd and November 23rd 2020.

This document outlines the **quality assurance process** used by the school to ensure that the Centre Assessed Grades and rank order were decided in the fairest way possible for all students, using consistent methodologies on all courses with due regard for unconscious bias:

1. **Clarity on rules.** All Subject Leaders had the instructions from Ofqual and the Awarding Organisations and meetings were held with them all.
2. **Professional judgement.** All staff were told to make holistic professional judgements based on the work and assessments completed prior to closure of school on the 20th March. Teachers and subject leaders were provided with a summary of the internal assessments (Key Assessments, including Mocks/PPEs) as a reminder of the grades achieved by students in these rigorous tests. They also referred to their own mark-books and knowledge of each student. Each subject team agreed the weighting of available evidence based on previous experience (for example of coursework compared to mock PPE exam results).
3. **Baseline data.** Subject Leaders were provided with a breakdown of the grades achieved by all students in their subject in the last 3 years, as a benchmark for awarding an approximate number of grades at each level. This data provided a broad picture, but did not dictate a quota, or determine which students should be awarded each grade, based on prior attainment. Any student could be awarded any grade, based on their attainment during the course, not on what they had achieved in previous external exams.
4. **Checking of cohort ability compared to previous years.** Once all courses had completed the base grading exercise, these grades were loaded into our internal analysis systems, which compares the grades awarded to those expected, according to the ability of the cohort. This determined whether the current cohort in each subject might be expected to do better or worse than the average of the past 3 years (i.e. if this was a stronger or weaker group of students compared to those in previous years). This then gave senior leaders in the school a starting point to question whether a subject team had been overly harsh or overly optimistic with the awarding of grades.
5. **Unconscious Bias check.** The data for each student was analysed by student groupings (for example male/female, prior attainment, free school meals) and reported on how the data compared to the national data set. For example, did the grades in a subject reflect what might be expected in terms of a gender gap?
6. **SEND check.** As above, students with exam concessions, especially if awarded in the second year of the course, were checked to ensure teachers had taken into account any extra-time or other support that the student would have had if they had taken the exam.
7. **Revisions and approval.** Subject teams met and agreed the grades, often producing many iterations of the list. Once all these checks were approved by senior leaders, the Headteacher signed off on the submissions.

8. **Checking.** All grades submitted have been checked to ensure that no administrative errors have occurred in the transcription of grades from one place to another.
9. **Adjustment, post submission.** We are aware that the Awarding Organisations are still likely to adjust these grades based on their own statistical modelling, using methodology not shared with the school during the process.
10. **Appeals from the Centre.** We will check the results when released in August and challenge awarding organisations if we think the grades have been unfairly adjusted.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why didn't we just use the PPE (mock) grades?

The PPEs are a vital part of the preparation for the real exams, giving students a practice opportunity and an indication of where they stand at that point in the year. However, they are not reliable predictors of final outcome on their own, for many students they are a 'wake-up call' that prompts serious revision and preparation.

Can I access the centre assessed grades that the school submitted to the awarding organisation?

Your son or daughter must make this request via a simple email from their school Office 365 account to data@tretherras.net. They will only be able to do this from the day after results day. For A Level (or equivalent) this will be 14th August and GCSEs from 21st August, 2020.

How do I go about entering my child for a resit?

We will be sending your son or daughter information about this directly after the Results Day in August. Due consideration will need to be made about this by you and your child; we are of course happy to help support you with this decision. As there is a very tight deadline, please direct any resit enquiries to our Exams Officer at exam@tretherras.net

Will my child be able to come into school to collect their results on results day?

No, this will all be done electronically this year. Please see the information that was sent out to you last month detailing the process. Results will be emailed to your child at 8am on results day.

I hope you find this information helpful. Please contact us at school if you need any further support.

With very best wishes

Yours sincerely,



MRS S FAIRBAIRN
Executive Headteacher