

24th April 2020

Dear Parent/Carer,

RE: Weekly Update – 24th April 2020

Firstly, we would like to thank all of our students and parents for their efforts to return to remote learning and to engage in the activities that have been set by staff over the last week. We are delighted to see the high quality of work that many of our students have been completing.

For clarity, students should regularly log into Google Classroom as teachers are uploading new activities and updating resources available on a daily basis.

Additionally, we have received a number of requests for more information and guidance regarding the situation following the cancellation of exams for Year 11 and Year 13. We have provided a link to, and a summary of, the guidance from Ofqual at the end of this letter, as well as clear internal guidance around the expectations for Year 11 and Year 13 to continue with aspects of their studies over the coming weeks.

Onsite Provision

As per our previous communications, you will be aware that there was no take up for the onsite provision for vulnerable students and the children of key workers. We are aware that situations at home may have changed, so if you did not initially put your child's name forward for this provision but now would like to, please contact the Academy via email to solihull.info@wmgacademy.org.uk and we will endeavour to accommodate you. Further guidance from the government on key workers that could consider this provision can be found [here](#).

Ongoing Communication

Please be reminded that if you need to contact the Academy throughout this period of closure, we recommend doing so by email to solihull.info@wmgacademy.org.uk. Telephone messages will still be routinely monitored, however you will receive a response far sooner via email communications. Please remember that any parental communications are also available on our website by clicking [here](#).

Once again, we want to thank you for your support and cooperation at this time. Please continue to look after yourselves and stay healthy.

Yours faithfully,



Mrs K Tague
Executive Principal



Mr S Tait
Associate Principal

Grading for Summer 2020 Examinations - an overview for Year 11 and Year 13 Students

As you will be aware, we outlined the government's position on summer examinations and grading in our last letter dated Friday 17th March and offer here an update regarding examination grading for 2020 summer examinations for Year 11 and Year 13.

You will be aware that Ofqual have launched a consultation on the details of proposals for GCSE and A-Level exam grading this summer.

Whilst nothing will be set in stone and finalised for another few weeks, it seems sensible to assume that this now forms the basis of what will happen. You can read this document by clicking [here](#), but we have summarised the key points as follows:

For all GCSE and A levels :

- Schools must provide exam boards with the grades they think students were most likely to receive in each subject, alongside a rank order of all students doing each subject.
- When submitting this information, schools need to make all their judgements using **everything** they know about students. This includes, for example, classwork, homework, performance in tests, mock exams and any coursework completed (or partially completed as the case may be). It is important to understand that schools will use **all** this information to make a judgement about what grades students were most likely to get if schools had not been closed and exams went ahead as usual. This **will** take into account the likely progress students would have made during their remaining time at the Academy as they 'ramped up' their preparation for exams and engaged in intervention and support from their teachers.
- The guidance states that, "where additional work has been completed after schools and colleges were closed on 20 March, Heads of Centre should exercise caution where that evidence suggests a change in performance. In many cases this is likely to reflect the circumstances and context in which the work is done." With this in mind, in our letter of the 17th April, we did not request that students submit any additional work completed after the Academy was closed on 20th March 2020 for use in grading but did encourage students to undertake tasks that we felt would complete content that was outstanding and give a better grounding for courses they may choose in the future, as well as helping keep them in a routine. Moving forwards, we will continue to post content and tasks to assist with this but these will be optional for students to complete and staff will hence not be following up non engagement or completion of set work for Year 11 students.
- It is very important for students and parents to be aware that Ofqual are being very clear that schools are not allowed to share the information they submit to the exam boards. This is to prevent a situation where schools are put under undue pressure by families to influence the process. Ofqual state that any attempts to influence school judgements "may be investigated by an exam board and if found to constitute malpractice, may result in sanctions". Therefore, we respectfully ask that parents and students avoid contacting teachers to discuss individual cases and to understand that teachers have been advised not to engage in any discussions.
- The guidance states that "once centre assessment grades have been submitted, exams boards will carry out a process being developed with Ofqual to statistically standardise the grades between different centres". The model will combine a range of evidence including:
 - Expected grade distributions at a national level

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- Results in previous years at individual centre level i.e. WMG Academy's previous results
- The prior attainment profile of students at centre level ie the Year 11 an Year 13 previous WMG cohorts -this means that the grades WMG Academy and indeed, all other schools submit and the final grade that students then go onto receive, could be different.
- Exam results days have been confirmed as 13th August for A Levels and 20th August for GCSEs. The intention is that there will be an opportunity for students to take exams in the Autumn term if they are not happy with the grades they are awarded. Perhaps understandably, there are no details available on this yet. It is possible, for example, that exams will only be available in some subjects. However, it is presumed at this point that students will be able to take some or all exams in the summer of 2021 but we will await more details further down the line.

What does this specifically mean for Year 11 Students for GCSE?

- Results for all courses will be awarded on the 20th August – we will release further details on what this day will look like as social distancing guidelines continue to be reviewed.

What does this specifically mean for Year 11 Students for OCR Nationals in Engineering and i-Media?

- The information on how these grades will be determined was released later than for GCSE. This has now been confirmed and will follow the same process as GCSE. However, in the interim of receiving this information some Year 11 parents have raised concerns regarding coursework, particularly in Art and Engineering. The initial guidance from Ofqual was to continue with this work while a fair and objective plan was generated for students across the country. As the school closure has gone on, the guidance from Ofqual has been that students and schools do not need to complete the coursework element of the courses and teachers will base their judgements on the detailed records they hold, up to the Academy closure on March 20th. This is to ensure fairness for all students who will be in vastly differing contexts and circumstances following the closure. We apologise if Year 11 students felt pressured or bombarded with requests for work from teachers in coursework elements of certain courses; staff were simply trying to keep all options open in terms of what they could use to base grades on. This letter reinforces and reassures Year 11 students and their parents that there is no requirement to submit any further work to the Academy for final grading purposes

What do Y11 students need to do now?

- Teachers will still continue to set some work for Year 11 on google classroom. As mentioned, this work is now optional for Year 11 students and is to encourage students to keep learning and to maintain good working habits. In addition, depending on what course Year 11 students have applied for next year, there will be a presumption that the student will have finished all of the content in relevant courses they studied in Year 11 to enable them to make the appropriate start on their new courses – this is one of the main reasons why content for some courses is still being posted online.
- Sixth form enrolment will now go ahead broadly as usual but we will be conducting Guidance Meetings via telephone or video links. Other Post 16 institutions and colleges will be doing likewise and students who have applied outside of the WMG Academy Sixth Form should check with the provider that they have applied to for further details.

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- We realise not having the opportunity to complete coursework may be disappointing to students, particularly in Art, Product Design and Engineering where some students have spent considerable amounts of time on this work. Of course, should the current lockdown restrictions be eased and the academy be able to open for students, these students would be invited to come in (if they wished to do so) for some sessions to complete for their own satisfaction, the ‘finishing off’ of their project or enhancing their portfolio of work to show future employers or colleges.

What does this mean specifically for Year 13 Students following A-Level courses?

- Results for all courses will be awarded on the 13th August – we will release further details on what this day will look like as social distancing guidelines continue to be reviewed.
- Year 13 students following A Level courses are not required to submit any further work for final assessment grade purposes. Staff will now use all of the information that they have to enable them to grade and rank students.
- We realise not having the opportunity to complete coursework may be disappointing to students, particularly in Art, Product Design and Engineering where some students have spent considerable amounts of time on this work. Of course, should the current lockdown restrictions be eased and the academy be able to open for students, these students would be invited to come in (if they wished to do so) for some sessions to complete for their own satisfaction, the ‘finishing off’ of their project or enhancing their portfolio of work to show future employers or Higher Education Institutions.

What does this mean specifically for Year 13 students following a BTEC course?

- As we are still awaiting the similar clear guidance for BTECs that has been provided for GCSEs and A Levels, **we do still need** Year 13 BTEC students to engage in and complete all tasks that are being set. We will of course immediately review that position once the guidance comes and we do expect this guidance imminently. However, due to the different nature of BTECs, the age and maturity of the students and the different balance of internally assessed and externally assessed units, it could put a student at considerable disadvantage if a student ceases to work now on units that the awarding body then subsequently asks for a grade on. Whilst this may not happen, we will be unsure until that exact guidance comes out and therefore the risk of stopping working now is just too much of a gamble. Hence, we respectfully request students remain focussed and working despite their obvious frustrations until we are certain on exactly how we will be asked to calculate their final grades.

What do Y13 students need to do now?

- Teachers will continue to set some work for Year 13 students where it allows any final subject content to be covered and secures the foundations of knowledge and understanding for future courses. This work is optional for students to complete but we encourage them to do so as future employers or education providers will expect that they will have fully covered all of the topics in the course that they have been awarded a grade for. This is particularly important for students who have applied for a pathway where their new pathway or course is underpinned by some of the content covered in their Key Stage 4 courses.

What does this specifically mean for future pathways, Higher Education Institutions, Colleges and Universities?

- As far as we are aware at the moment, the UCAS process for university applications continues as normal. When we receive any further information on UCAS applications, we will of course pass this on to students and parents. In the meantime, applicants to University would be wise to check information that they may have emailed out to students or posted on their websites.
- Companies and businesses are continuing to operate under extreme pressures and in a totally new environment and hence students who have applied for employment positions or Apprenticeships should continue to check for updates and information with those companies and try to not get too concerned if information appears to be limited as just because they do not have the resources to communicate effectively at the moment about future opportunities, this does not mean that they won't be offering them.