



21 April 2021

Dear Fifth Form Boys and Families

I hope this finds you safe and well.

I write with two key updates relating to qualifications this summer: the arrangements for study leave and core assessments over the coming weeks and some guidance about grading this summer.

Study Leave and Core Assessments

The arrangements for study leave and core assessments can be found on the portal [here](#). Mrs Martin-Merchant and I outlined the arrangements in a year group assembly earlier today, but we ask all boys and families to read these arrangements carefully ahead of the first GCSE/IGCSE core assessments next Monday.

Guidance about how grades will be awarded

Over the Easter break, the Joint Council for Qualification (JCQ) issued guidance written specifically for students, parents and guardians about how grades will be awarded this summer. JCQ represent most of the different exam boards, so allows them to speak with a 'single voice'. This JCQ guidance can be found [here](#), and includes details about the national timeline, mechanism of assessment, results and appeals. All boys will be required to read this guidance and, in due course, will be asked to confirm their understanding of the arrangements. I include some further detail below outlining the specific arrangements we have put in place at Bedford School to apply this guidance.

Approach to evidence

As explained last term, we are dividing the evidence each qualification will use into "core evidence" and pre-existing "additional evidence". Core evidence will include coursework and the core written assessments the boys are taking over the coming weeks. This core evidence is likely to give teachers relatively high confidence of a boy's attainment, as these assessments will be recent and completed under a high level of supervision. Pre-existing additional evidence will include assessments from across the course of study, such as block tests. Additional evidence will also be considered within the range of evidence when determining grades in a holistic manner. Over the coming weeks boys' teachers will explain the core and pre-existing additional evidence we intend to use in each qualification.

Mitigating circumstances

An important requirement of the grading process is boys should have the opportunity to let us know if they believe any evidence we plan to use from across their GCSE studies (i.e. since September 2019) was affected by personal circumstances ("mitigating circumstances", in exam board speak), such as illness. Mitigating circumstances are issues or events that have, or are reasonably likely to have, a material effect on a boy's ability to take an assessment or demonstrate his normal level of attainment in an assessment.

Mitigating circumstances include illness, injury or bereavement at the time of an assessment, rather than during revision time. These circumstances can then be accounted for by applying “special consideration” to evidence used, which is typically a small uplift to marks in an assessment. More detailed guidance can be found [here](#), which illustrates the typical special consideration given to different mitigating circumstances.

We ask that if boys feel that they have experienced personal circumstances of this nature they let us know via [this form](#). This form should be completed by **Friday 30 April** for any personal circumstances between September 2019 and April 2021, and then during core written assessments for any circumstances at the time of these assessments. We ask that you complete the form whether the School is already aware of your personal circumstances or not - this will allow us to account for relevant issues when reviewing the body of evidence for an individual boy.

Please note that special consideration cannot be applied due to lost teaching and learning (including remote learning) owing to the pandemic, as this will be addressed through the flexibility of the range of evidence which a school can use to determine grades.

Format of core written assessments

The assessment materials we use will for core written assessments will be based on past papers, other materials produced by the exam board, or centre-devised tasks. Any centre-devised tasks will reflect the specification, follow the same format as exam board materials and will be marked in a way that reflects exam board mark schemes.

As such, boys should not assume that they will be given questions that are freely published by the exam board from past papers in their assessments – nor should they be surprised if they do see questions that they may have completed as part of their revision or earlier in the course. Psychologically, there are complex and conflicting mechanisms in play either way (including disappointment at not seeing specific questions appear, stress at trying to retrieve from memory a specific answer, etc.) so boys should simply get down and answer a question from scratch, regardless of whether they think they may have tackled it before!

Equally, boys should expect differences between the format of assessments in different subjects according to the specification requirements of each course and the materials produced by different awarding bodies. Inevitably, there will also be differences between different schools and colleges in any assessment materials used this term – some will be setting more or fewer tests than others, and in different formats - as each centre will be drawing on different pre-existing evidence within their grading decisions. Ultimately, the same central JCQ guidance applies to all relevant qualifications.

Cambridge Assessment International Examinations (CAIE) IGCSE qualifications

Please note the JCQ guidance applies to GCSE and IGCSE Pearson Edexcel only. For CAIE IGCSEs (ESL, DT, French, German and Spanish), there is a similar process, however rather than a ‘basket of evidence’ we will be asked to submit just three pieces of evidence for each qualification. Teachers will explain these differences when they tell boys which pieces of evidence will be used for grading.

Results and Appeals

More information about results and appeals will be published from the exam boards later this term and we will give full information ahead of results day on Thursday 12 August 2021. Boys will be able to access their results electronically from 8.00am on this day, although staff will be available in school by appointment to support individual boys with any immediate decisions required.

Finally

I hope all boys have found a productive Easter of revision ahead of the core assessments and are feeling well prepared for the weeks ahead.

Please use [this link](#) to ask any questions you may have about the arrangements for qualifications this summer. We will direct your question to the appropriate member of staff, who will do their best to respond in as much detail as we are able to give.

With all best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "S. Baldock". The letters are cursive and slightly slanted to the right.

Sam Baldock
Deputy Head (Academic)