

Dear Year 11, 12 and 13 Parents/ Carers,

As per my letter of the 7th March, I am now writing to give you an outline of the assessment process which will enable us to submit grades to the awarding bodies this summer. The exam boards have just released their guidance materials which will help us to do this robustly and fairly. We are scrutinising these materials carefully and are confident that we can assess all of our students in a manner which will enable them to achieve the grades they deserve with the minimum stress, reflecting the complicated and erratic last twelve months that they have experienced educationally. I am explaining this information to students in a virtual assembly, but please do discuss this letter with them.

To ensure that we have a robust and fair system for doing this we will have three assessment windows which each subject will use to run 'in class' assessments. These apply to all year 11, 12 and 13 qualifications except BTECs. (Please see the note at the end regarding these.)

These windows will be:

Window 1: 26th April - 30th April 2021

Window 2: 10th May - 14th May 2021

Window 3: 24th May - 28th May 2021

Students will be told the content of these assessments so that they can prepare for them but not necessarily the exact questions. For example, a list of topics, themes or content may be provided in advance. Some assessments may run over more than one lesson in some cases.

The staggering of assessment windows enables students to prepare before each assessment without becoming overwhelmed or overloaded. This is different to the intense revision process that the summer exam season normally entails because we are taking into account the very different run up to this period that students have experienced.

Staff will provide access arrangement in class (for example extra time for those entitled to this). The week between each assessment windows provides some flexibility in case those students with access arrangements need to complete assessments at different times to ensure they have the right provision. If any students are ill or absent during an assessment, the middle weeks can also be used to catch up those who may have missed out.

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Why not in exam halls?

Exams have been cancelled this year; therefore there is no requirement for 'high stakes' exams. As students are able to prepare for these assessments there is no need to keep questions secure in the normal manner so it should not matter if students complete assessments on different days of the assessment week.

What if students perform worse in the summer assessments than in previous assessments?

Heads of Faculty will plan for a 'safety-net' assessment in each subject. For example, this could be the mock exam that was completed last term or any in-class assessment that has been done under a suitable level of control.

The purpose of this is to ensure that a student who may perform less well or be disadvantaged in the assessment windows still has an opportunity to show what they are capable of. Performance in the assessments during the summer term will be compared to the 'safety net'. If the 'safety net' is higher, this could be awarded instead if the Head of Faculty is satisfied that the 'safety net' provided a fair grade. The assessments this summer therefore provide an opportunity for students to demonstrate they have improved and can now perform at a higher level.

How do we ensure the assessments are fair across each subject?

The Head of Faculty will decide on the assessments being taken by all classes in the department to enable moderation and ranking to take place. There will be a thorough moderation process across each subject once work has been marked. This will be approved by the line manager and overseen by the Head of Exams and ultimately by me as Head of Centre.

Do assessments cover the entire course?

No, we will assess enough of the course to enable us to make a fair judgement of students' performance. We will only be assessing units that students have been taught and had a proper chance to learn.

Will any other assessments be considered when making an overall judgement?

Where practical assessment is needed, this will be scheduled on the dates between the assessment windows. If Non-Examined Assessment/Controlled Assessment/Coursework has been completed, this may be taken into consideration, proportional to the usual weightings set by the exam board. Similarly, if unit tests have been completed, the results will be used to support an overall grade being awarded.

How do we turn scores into grades?

This year, there are no external 'grade boundaries' which will be applied to our marking. We will be following the guidance from exam boards and we will look at our historical distributions of grades. We are not comparing students' marks to other students nationwide but we will create a fair in-school distribution. This will be broadly in-line with historic results.

What if students haven't been taught all of the specification?

If elements of the course have not yet been taught, they will not be assessed.

What do students need to know before Easter?

We will be explaining to students how many assessments there will be and when these will take place. We will inform them of the broad content of what they should prepare, focussing on the first assessment window in more detail. This may be a list of topics, for example.

What about BTECs?

BTEC assessments or estimates will be completed at the direction of the exam board at any point and may comply with the assessment windows. The requirements in each vocational course vary but what students need to do will be carefully explained.

How can I support my daughter/son at this stage?

What students don't need to do is start trying to learn all of the content of all their courses. They will be given clear direction on what to prepare. In order to do their best, they need to be organised and clear on this. They will benefit from working at home and preparing over the holiday but they do not need to work all holiday. I suggest the following:

- Check that they know what to prepare for in each subject.
- Encourage them to directly contact their teachers if they are unsure or have queries.
- If in doubt, please contact the Head of Faculty (details on our website) or one of us - listed below.
- As much as you can, facilitate a place in your home where your son/daughter can work for two to three hours a day over the break, and not more than five hours any day.
- Encourage them to sleep, eat and exercise healthily and have some good breaks and fun too.

When will students in Years 11-13 finish?

We are aiming for all assessments to be finished by the beginning of May half term, 29th May, and normal lessons will cease for Year 11 and 13 at this point. It is possible that some students may need to return to school in the week following half term to complete a missed assessment or some practical work but we will confirm this nearer to the time. There will be opportunities to provide students with advice about their next steps following the May half term and we are planning to run some post-16 taster days for Year 11 in June.

When will grades and the results be released?

We will not be able to release any grades achieved during the assessment windows but the results of these assessments will inform a holistic grade that is submitted to the relevant exam board. These grades will be decided upon following careful moderation in early June. Results from the exam boards will be available for A-level/Level 3 courses on Tuesday 12th August and for GCSE/Level 2 courses on Thursday 14th August. More details will follow in the summer.

If you have urgent concerns or questions, please contact:

- Assistant Head, Mr Humphrey (phil.humphrey@teignmouth.devon.sch.uk),
- Deputy Head, Mrs Atkinson (samantha.atkinson@teignmouth.devon.sch.uk),
- or me (james.oconnell@teignmouth.devon.sch.uk).

I do hope that you feel some reassurances that we will be both fair and supportive in this whole process. Although this situation is new and different from the traditional means of grading young people, I am going to dare to suggest that I think this year we will be enabling this to happen more fairly and supportively than ever.

Best wishes and I do hope that, despite the current times and challenges, you and your whole family will be able to enjoy the Easter break.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "James O'Connell".

James O'Connell
Principal