15 March 2020

Dear Year 11 Parents/ Carers and Students,

I last wrote to you in February, prior to our Year 11 Parents Evening. At that time, we had just received guidance for schools from Ofqual regarding the assessment of students for Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs) which are replacing the traditional GCSE examinations this year. I would like to now take the opportunity to share our plans for teaching and learning and managing the assessment of students in each subject.

Firstly, it is very important for both students and parents to understand that the College Forecast Grades provided for students in January were ‘optimistic’. This was made clear at the time of sharing these grades and was intended to allow students to be able to progress in their college applications. ***Currently, some students are under the impression that their ‘optimistic’ College Forecast Grade will be their awarded grade - this is not the case!***It has repeatedly been made clear that teachers will be held to account for any grade that is awarded and that grades must be clearly evidenced through assessments taken through the course.

We have now worked closely with Heads of Faculty in the school and are working with all staff to ensure that we have a robust and equitable approach to the evidencing of TAGs. It is clear that all teachers in all schools will need to be able to evidence any assigned grade and this will be by ensuring that a number of processes are in place to remove any potential bias. We have built into our timeline of actions to support the TAGs a number of robust systems: these will include data analysis of internal data to look at variation between classes studying the same subject within the school and examination of the reasons for this; standardisation within the school and across the borough, with other schools and evidence of the outcomes of this; ‘blind marking’ of substantial assessments to ensure that the teacher marking the student does not know the student; final judgements based on a review of physical evidence as well as data.

The final Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs) that are awarded to students will be a professional judgement, balancing different sources of evidence and data.  They will take into account existing records and evidence from assessments already completed over the course of study, as well as the new evidence generated in the upcoming months. More recent evidence is likely to be more representative of student performance, although there may be exceptions to this. Please note, no subject will take an ‘average’ grade approach to assessments but will look to the strongest evidence to support the awarding of a grade.

Given the interruptions to education during the two years of GCSE courses, many subjects have had to reduce course content or even eliminate some elements entirely. We are aware that this may cause concern for students in some subjects in particular, as they may have gaps in their knowledge that may make the transition to A level courses more challenging. For students who are continuing with a subject at A level, and are concerned about gaps in knowledge, we will be offering ***‘bridging’ classes to ensure that our students are well prepared to continue higher level studies successfully***. These classes will be run in June and will be optional with a sign-up process that will be shared with students nearer the time.

Over the next few weeks until half term, we have generally paused assessments to allow students to be supported by their teachers in preparing for assessments. Following the Easter holidays ***students will have a four-week assessment window*** - we will not be holding assessments in an exam hall - they will be held within timetabled lessons and organised by the class teacher. Students will be given advanced notice of the assessment including ***how long it will be, what format it will take and when in the lesson it will be scheduled***. When not completing an assessment, students will be allowed to revise privately for another subject throughout the 4 weeks. These assessments will provide significant evidence in supporting the Teacher Assessed Grade and these will be particularly important to students hoping to achieve the more aspirational College Forecast Grade.

Please see below a summary of key dates relevant for Year 11 students, including their final formal teaching day:

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| 15th-31st March | Lessons focussed on content and revision to prepare for assessment window |
| Wednesday17th March | Year 11 students will be given a blank assessment calendar in registration to complete as they meet with teachers over the following 2 weeks. They will note details of assessments planned for after Easter. |
| Thursday 1st April | Staff INSET for Year 11 standardisation |
| Easter Holidays |
| 19th April- 14th May (4 weeks) | Assessment window -many subjects will set the exam papers that would previously have been used in the mock exams. There will also be practical assessments taking place. |
| 17th May-28th May | Final 2 weeks to compile evidence, provide additional evidence for areas lacking in strong evidence |
| Friday 28th May | Last formal day of teaching |
| Half Term |
| 21st June-9th July | Bridging lessons offered for A level transition |
| 25th June pm | Year 11 Leavers’ Day (weather dependent as this is an outside event!) |
| 12th August | National GCSE Results Day |

We will update you next half term with details regarding ‘Bridging Lessons’, Leavers’ Day and Results Day.

Kind regards

**Ms Kennedy**

**Associate Headteacher/ Deputy Headteacher**