

2020-21 Curriculum and Assessment guide for parents and carers

Introduction

2020 is a year in which national curriculums and assessment have been revised, particularly for students entering Year 11 and Year 13

This guide is intended to give our parents and carers more information about our curriculum and assessment plans for 2020-21 to ensure that all our students are able to make the progress that they should, and that our Year 11 and Year 13 students are well prepared for whatever form the 2021 GCSE, A-level and BTEC assessments take.

It should be read in conjunction with our virtual Expectation Evening presentations that will be shared with parents and carers on Friday 4th and Friday 11th September.

What is different for 2020-21?

Through 2020 schools and students have had to navigate a number of changes to the normal arrangements for curriculum, assessment and external examinations. There have also been significant and, often, unexpected changes in the direction of national policy. For this reason we are preparing flexibly for 2020-21 so that our students are well-prepared for a range of eventualities.

How will we modify the curriculum for students in 2020-21?

Ofqual's current decisions regarding assessments and examinations for 2021 can be found at the link below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/exams-and-assessments-in-2021#:~:text=Ofqual%20confirms%20changes%20to%20GCSEs,proposals%20for%20adjustments%20to%20VTQs.&text=Overall%2C%20these%20will%20free%20up,within%20current%20public%20health%20restrictions.>

These include changes to:

- The assessment of content in GCSE Geography and History
- GCSE English literature
- Fieldwork requirements in a number of subjects
- The assessment of students' spoken language skills in modern foreign languages
- Non-exam assessment arrangements in a number of subjects

At the start of next term, teachers will be sharing with students the curriculum modifications that we will be making in response to these changes. Ofqual are also continuing to consider the timing of the 2021 summer examination series, and to explore different options for contingency measures should there be further disruption in 2020-21.

For other year groups, schools have also been given some curriculum flexibility in 2020-21.

To address the above, we have increased the amount of curriculum planning time available to our teachers so that they can ensure that appropriate curriculum modifications can be made in response to announcements from Ofqual regarding 2021 assessments and examinations, and also to ensure that for all year groups, including Year 7, the curriculum builds effectively from the spring and summer of 2020.

How will teaching support students?

In recent years there has been a great deal of research in education into time-efficient teaching and learning that allows learning to occur more quickly and effectively.

We feel that this is particularly important for 2020-21, so we will be ensuring that our teachers, students and parents are aware of these strategies.

For parents and carers more details can be found in our *Teaching and Learning guide for parents: from the front teaching*, and in our virtual Expectations Evening presentations.

For students we will be sharing strategies for Smart Learning through our Induction programme.

How will we assess students in 2021?

In all year groups we will be starting 2020-21 with a focus on checking our students' learning so that we can identify any learning gaps and plan our teaching and curriculum accordingly.

Where this highlights any concerns about your son or daughter's learning we will be in touch to discuss with you how we can work together to address this. We will also be in touch with all our parents and carers in October with an update on how your son or daughter has adjusted to the return to school in terms of his or her learning and progress.

Mock examinations

This year, performance in mock examinations **may** be important as part of the assessment process. Because we cannot rule this out, we want to give our Year 11 and 13 students the best opportunity to prepare for their mock examinations.

For this reason our mock examination dates are:

Year group	Dates for mock examinations
Year 13	Week commencing 23 rd November
Year 11	Fortnight commencing 30 th November
Year 10	Fortnight commencing 4 th January
Year 12	Week commencing 18 th January

For Year 10-13 students who want to do additional exam practice we will be offering our usual Exam Monday after-school sessions from Monday 21st September.

For Key Stage 3 students, midyear assessments will be sat as normal in January/ February.

UCAS grades

The deadline for final UCAS grades from teachers this year will be December 16th. This is intended to give students the opportunity to improve on initial UCAS grades, if students would like to do this, through further practice and assessment. Students can use Exam Mondays for this purpose.

Ensuring sufficient teaching time for examination classes

It is important that Year 11 and 13 students in particular can feel confident that there will be sufficient preparation time for the 2021 examinations. For this reason, each subject will be producing the guide below for students which will be shared in conjunction with our virtual Expectation Evening presentations. The extension of period 5 for Year 11 and 13 students, as part of our staggered exit, also provides an extra 50 minutes per week of additional teaching time for these year groups:

Guided teaching hours required	Independent practice hours required	Assessment hours required

Parents Evenings and reports

Due to current social distancing requirements there will be no on-site parents' evenings this half term. We will keep this situation under regular review.

Parents and carers will receive an update on your child's learning and progress in October including the plans for further contact with parent and carers over the autumn term.

How will we support all our students?

1. We will be ensuring that all our students have regular opportunities to discuss their learning and progress with us. Further details on this will follow next week from the staff listed below:

Year 7	Mr Munro
Years 8-10	Heads of House
Year 11	Mr MacHugh
Years 12-13	Mr Williams
Students on our Special Education Needs register	Mrs Glover

2. As you will see from the virtual Expectations Evenings, Mr Conley has put together a Smart Learning programme. This draws on cognitive psychology is intended to ensure that our students are aware of the most effective and efficient learning strategies available to them. We would urge all our parents and carers to listen to his presentation on Smart Learning.
3. Effective use of Firefly, and organisation of Firefly tasks, are important to ensure that students stay 'on top of' their work. For this reason we will be providing more training for students and parents where this would be helpful. **We would strongly encourage students and parents to use our Start of Term Digital Learning Survey to let us know what extra training and support would be helpful.**
4. Use of an effective IT device for learning (whether this is at home or in school) is important to our students being able to learn effectively. The wrong device, or the right device used in the wrong way, can get in the way of effective learning. It is also important to emphasise that a phone is not an effective IT device for learning because it does not give sufficient opportunities for students to process their learning. **We are therefore using the Start of Term Digital Learning Survey to check that all our students have an effective IT device for learning (either at home or in school) that they can use effectively for a range of learning activities.**

We will keep our parents and carers regularly updated on our curriculum and assessment plans as we move through the year.

Thank you for taking the time to read this guide.