



**Cookstown High School**  
Combined Grammar & Secondary School

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11<sup>th</sup> March 2021

Dear Parent/Carer,

**Re: Centre Determined Grades**

You will all now be aware that once again, as in 2020, GCSE, AS and A level examinations, have been cancelled. This is because the Northern Ireland Executive and many across the education sector do not believe that it would be practical or fair to award grades based upon examinations this year.

Following a lengthy consultation, CCEA has now set out the approach that all schools will take on awarding grades to pupils in Year 12, Year 13 and Year 14 this year. This letter contains the most recent guidance, released to schools on Friday 5<sup>th</sup> March. You may also find this infographic helpful which has been produced by CCEA. While there is a great deal of detail here that will be of interest, the key point is, as we stated to Year 12, 13 and 14 pupils earlier this year, that significant effort and engagement from this point forward will be essential, if pupils are to be awarded grades that reflect their ambitions and personal best.

Unlike in 2020 when teaching and assessment stopped for these year groups in March, engagement over lockdown has been essential. Staff look forward to supporting all pupils in Years 12, 13 and 14, as we continue to work hard over the coming weeks to learn the final elements of the curriculum still to be taught and engage in the essential assessment that will allow us, as a school, to award grades that fairly and honestly reflect the very high standards that I know our pupils are capable of.

**Principles**

There are a few principles that can be taken from the guidance as it stands:

1. The priority for the Department of Education is “fairness and consistency”.
2. The Minister, believes that in the absence of exams, teachers are best placed to determine grades. Centre Determined Grade must be a realistic, evidence-based judgement of the standard at which a pupil is performing, i.e. their demonstrated knowledge, understanding and skills in the content they have covered.
3. Vocational qualifications used for progression to Sixth Form, further or higher education should be treated like GCSEs, AS levels and A levels.
4. The expected performance standard will be broadly the same as in previous years.
5. Schools will be able to use strong evidence from throughout course which demonstrates specific skills, although whether we choose to do so will be at the school’s discretion.
6. Every pupil who believes their grade does not reflect their performance or has not been properly determined will have a clear route to appeal.

**Key dates**

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| Monday 19 <sup>th</sup> - Friday 23 <sup>rd</sup> April:       | Assessment Week for AS and A Level pupil, in some subjects. |
| Monday 26 <sup>th</sup> April - Friday 30 <sup>th</sup> April: | Assessment Week for Year 12, in some subjects.              |
| Tuesday 10 <sup>th</sup> August:                               | AS, A2 and Level 3 BTEC Results Day                         |
| Thursday 12 <sup>th</sup> August:                              | GCSE and Level 2 BTEC Results Day                           |

### **Awarding grades**

Please find a summary of how GCSE AS and A Level grades will be awarded, based on current guidance:

1. Teachers will use their expertise to decide the range of evidence that will enable their pupils to show what they know and can do, within parameters set by CCEA and Pearson (BTEC).
2. CCEA guidance sets out a list of those sources of and approaches to collecting evidence that are considered most effective in determining grades.
3. Teachers will draw on strong evidence when forming judgements (as determined by CCEA).
4. Judgements will be based on strong evidence of the pupil's performance against the areas of the qualification specification which have been taught.
5. Pupils will continue to work on Coursework.
6. The centre determined grade will be made and a quality assurance process has been established to ensure fairness and consistency.

### **Malpractice**

1. There may be instances where schools and colleges or teachers are put under improper pressure from a pupil or their parent/guardian to influence the decision-making on a grade.
2. Schools are obliged to report any improper pressure to CCEA, and we may investigate this as potential malpractice.

### **Appeals**

There will be an appeals process which will be issued in due course.

I hope this helps to add clarity to how Cookstown High School, will be awarding GCSE, AS and A Level grades this summer. I will share any further information, as soon as it becomes available.

Yours sincerely



Miss G J Evans  
Principal