

Dear parents/carers and students,

This letter is to provide an update for students who are completing qualifications this summer about what we now know from government, following updates over the weekend.

What is very clear is that students that were due to complete qualifications this summer will still be awarded qualifications this summer. Both the government and the college have expressed their commitment to doing this fairly, so that students are awarded the grades they deserve and have worked hard for. Universities have expressed their commitment to ensuring that students are able to progress to university this autumn.

The government is currently working with examination boards and teacher representatives to finalise the details. We are grateful to students and parents for their patience at this time and while we await final guidance.

Awarding of calculated grades

Ofqual, the independent qualifications regulator, is currently developing a process for determining the final calculated grades that students will be awarded this summer, given that summer examinations for all courses have been cancelled.

Indications are that this process will take account of a broad range of evidence. We expect that this will be largely informed by teacher assessment, which is likely to use indicators such as mock exams, assessments, predicted grades and teacher knowledge of students. It is important to stress that teachers will approach this process fairly and with professional integrity.

The exam boards, not teachers, will ultimately determine the final grades awarded and Ofqual has committed to a process which enables exam boards to take account of the prior attainment of students and the historical results of each school or college. This is reassuring, given the very strong track record of our colleges.

As it is the examinations boards that will determine the final grades based on a range of evidence provided, and adjustments that they choose to make, the college will not be in a position to discuss individual grades with students, parents and carers prior to the publication of results in July.

The government has been keen to emphasise that it will be aiming to ensure that the overall distribution of grades awarded is in line with previous years and that awarded grades will have the same status as in any other year.

Students that are unhappy with the calculated grades they are awarded

Ofqual are intending to offer an opportunity for students unhappy with their awarded grades to sit examinations as early as possible when schools and colleges reopen. Universities are being encouraged to apply flexibility in terms of students taking up places later than planned in such circumstances.

The importance of continued learning

For any students that would be completing qualifications this summer that would ordinarily have had examinations (A level, WJEC, Level 2 courses), our current intention is to continue teaching via distance-learning until Friday 22 May. This is the point at which Year 13 students would normally complete their studies in college and go on study leave.

Year 13 students completing BTEC courses will continue via distance-learning until remaining units have been fully completed and students have been signed off, unless guidance from the examinations boards suggests a different approach is more appropriate.

There are a number of important reasons why students should continue to engage with their studies through distance-learning in these remaining weeks:

1) **Securing the best grades for examined courses**

For students that would normally be sitting exams this summer, the detail of how schools and colleges will assist the exam boards in determining calculated grades has not yet been finalised. There remains the possibility that the work students complete in the remaining weeks can be taken into consideration. This will be particularly important for students who feel their assessment or mock results do not reflect their full potential.

2) **Securing the best grades for BTEC courses**

For students that are due to complete BTEC qualifications, the detail of which units students will be expected to have fully completed and how the grades will be determined has not yet been finalised. As such, there remains the possibility that students may be required to have completed units that are currently unfinished.

3) **Preparation for possible examinations when colleges reopen**

Students that are unhappy with the grades awarded in July may opt to sit the exams early when schools and colleges reopen. In such a circumstance, it is important that those students have studied the full breadth of their courses so that they are well placed to perform well in those exams.

4) **Being ready for future study or employment**

We want to ensure that students that progress to university, apprenticeships and employment are well-prepared and have been able to fully benefit from the courses they have studied at New College, irrespective of how grades are awarded. That's why we want to do our best to finish off your courses with you as much as possible.

5) **Supporting students**

The following few months are going to be a strange and sometimes difficult time for all of us. Sustaining learning, engaging with teachers and keeping in touch with fellow students are valuable and important ways of helping students to maintain a sense of normality, structure and support. We believe that continued engagement in distance learning is good for students' wider wellbeing and mental health, as well as their education.

We would like to thank students for the way they have conducted themselves over the last couple of weeks, for their patience, and for the hard work we know they will continue to put into their studies in the weeks that remain. It will take all of us a little time to adjust to this temporary way of working and

we expect some glitches along the way, but with resilience and a shared commitment, we know we can make a success of it.

We encourage any students, parents or carers that have any worries about distance-learning, or the well-being of students, to contact progress tutors or teachers in the normal way. Staff will also continue to use Cedar, and students, parents and carers can continue to view comments, actions and support that are logged within the pastoral log.

We will continue to keep you updated as and when further information becomes available or if arrangements are adjusted in light of circumstances and government guidance.

Yours sincerely,

Trust Executive Team