



Ref: GWA/LWO

7 January 2021

Dear Year 12/13 students and parents/carers

*This message has already been sent to students via school email this afternoon*

Whilst this message is primarily aimed at Y13 students, some of the contents may be of relevance to Y12 students. You will receive further communication from our excellent Sixth Form team in the next few days.

Yesterday, the Education Secretary, Gavin Williamson MP, confirmed that the summer exam season was to be cancelled. He did **NOT** indicate what alternative arrangements were to be put in place but it does look likely that, like last year, Centre Assessed Grades (CAGs), will play a key role in your final examination grades. What follows is an educated guess as to what might now happen.

Many of you will already know what your plans are for 2021-2022 and, equally, many university applications will already have been submitted. So what are the implications and should you be worried?

Understandably, many of you will be frustrated at the absence of an opportunity to showcase your skills in the summer but for others the removal of exams may be welcomed. In many ways, you are fortunate when compared to the year group that preceded you.

The decision to cancel exams has come significantly earlier and the strong likelihood is that you will return to school to complete your studies. The exact timing of that clearly depends on the trajectory of the virus. We already have a set of 'banked' mock exam results from before Christmas. These will help inform your Centre Assessed Grades (CAGs). Another set of PPEs (mocks) had already been scheduled for this year but our intention is now to hold these in the summer term, possibly in May. **This second set of mocks is what you now need to be working towards as these will give the clearest indication and best evidence for your subject teachers to use when submitting CAGs.**

**In simple terms, carry on working to the best of your ability towards summer exams which (at this moment in time) will be internal.**

**The Sixth Form team, myself and your subject teachers have been mightily impressed with the attitude and approach of Sixth Formers since September. We do not want you to now lose that momentum and motivation which has been so strong in the vast majority of cases. My strong advice is, therefore, to continue to apply yourselves to the best of your abilities and demonstrate to yourself in the summer what you were capable of achieving.**

*So why could the Government not commit to holding 'proper' A level exams in the summer if we can do that?*

Essentially, the difficulty the Government faces is the varied experiences of A level students across the country. Some areas have been hit more harshly by the virus and, thus, some A level students have missed significantly more learning than others. A standard assessment across the board would not create a level playing field and that is one of the key reasons why the decision has been taken to cancel A levels and GCSEs. Individual centres, however, will be able to host their own internal exams in a similar way to we did last December - assuming the public health situation is improved in early summer - and use those results alongside other data to inform CAGs.

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We are also fortunate that this year the likelihood is that practical components will be able to happen and, again, go some way to informing CAGs. For some of you with highly developed practical skills or perhaps sporting skills these will enhance your CAG.

Last August, there was a debacle around A level results as a result of the application of an algorithm (statistical process) which was designed to iron out unfairness between centres and students. That algorithm was discredited and students ended up receiving two sets of results, the first on a Thursday and then, in many cases, improved results the following Monday. The Government will not be making that mistake again (surely!) and it is likely, though not certain at this stage, that CAGs will form the key element of your final grades.

We are determined to allow students the opportunity to complete external assessments such as BTECs in the current exam window. We believe that students have been more than adequately prepared for assessments this week and during the rest of January and early February. It would be wrong to not allow students who have been working solidly for at least the last 20 weeks to not have the opportunity to demonstrate their potential as early as this week. We firmly believe that these assessments can proceed safely and that is our intention. Students directly affected will receive separate instructions.

I will finish by wishing you all the very best in the immediate future and encouraging you to keep hold of the 'can do' attitude and positive self-motivation that was so much in evidence during the autumn term. We have strong connections with UCAS in Cheltenham and others in the university sector and will be pressing them for further information and keeping you duly informed.

Stay positive, work towards that second set of exam results and remember - the year group ahead of you survived and ALL went on to appropriate destinations. You may feel that the sky has caved in today but the sunshine will be back out soon.

Don't worry, be happy. Thankfully, our success in life is not purely determined by exam results. It is the places you've been, the people you've met and the memories you've made that shape your life. My A level results are of little interest to anyone frankly other than Loughborough University in 1984.

We have a quite superb group of people charged with looking after your interests in the 6th form and they would feel honoured to help you out if you need support.

Look after yourselves and your families and stay safe everyone.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G.M. Watson', written in a cursive style.

**Mr G M Watson**  
**Headteacher**