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Dear Parents/Carers

We have now received further information regarding the 2021 exam series and would like to share the Department for Education statement with you.

The Department for Education released the following information:

Students sitting exams and other assessments next year will benefit from a package of exceptional measures to make them as fair as possible and manage the disruption caused by Covid-19, Education Secretary Gavin Williamson announced today (Thursday 3 December).

In recognition of the challenges faced by students this year, grades will be more generous, students will be given advance notice of some topic areas, and steps will be taken to ensure every student receives a grade, even if they miss a paper due to self-isolation or illness.

The Government has been clear that exams are the fairest way to judge a student's performance and has made keeping schools and colleges open a national priority throughout the pandemic in order to minimise disruption to education.

Building on the three-week delay to exams to free up extra teaching time announced in October, the new measures include:

- *more generous grading than usual, in line with national outcomes from 2020, so students this year are not disadvantaged;*
- *students receiving advance notice of some topic areas covered in GCSE to focus revision;*



- exam aids - like formula sheets - provided in some exams giving students more confidence and reducing the amount of information they need to memorise;
- additional exams to give students a second chance to sit a paper if the main exams or assessments are missed due to illness or self-isolation; and
- a new expert group to look at differential learning and monitor the variation in the impact of the pandemic on students across the country.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Exams are the best way of giving young people the opportunity to show what they can do which is why it's so important they take place next summer.

But this isn't business as usual. I know students are facing unprecedented disruption to their learning. That's why exams will be different next year, taking exceptional steps to ensure they are as fair as possible.

I am determined to support students, parents and teachers in these unprecedented times and hope measures like more generous grading and advance notice of some topic areas will give young people the clarity and confidence they need to achieve every success.

Today's steps follow extensive engagement with Ofqual, exam boards and senior leaders across the education sector.

The measures recognise that while teachers have gone above and beyond to support their pupils during a difficult period, some young people have had their teaching disrupted more than others and will need extra support to catch up on the curriculum and achieve their potential in exams.

In these instances, receiving advance notice of some topic areas and being given exam aids will support students and ensure they can move on to their next stage of education, training or employment with the grades they deserve.

Students taking vocational and technical qualifications (OCR National PE, BTEC Enterprise, BTEC Performing Arts and BTEC Music) will also see adaptations to ensure parity between general and vocational qualifications. Some vocational qualifications will require more varied adaptations due to the different qualification types.

The Government has also developed a series of contingency measures with Ofqual that will mean, even if students miss one or more exams due to self-



isolation or sickness but have still completed a proportion of their qualification they will still receive a grade.

If a student misses all their assessments in a subject, they will have the opportunity to sit a contingency paper held shortly after the main exams. In the extreme case where a student has a legitimate reason to miss all their papers, then a validated teacher informed assessment can be used, only once all chances to sit an exam have passed.

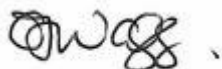
The Government will set out further detail on this process, and on adaptations to exams, in the new year.

We understand this must be a worrying time for Year 11 students and their families. We hope this news reassures you that the Department for Education are seeking a solution to the problems caused by the disruption to their education. It is now such an important time to ensure that your child works hard to give them every opportunity to achieve the highest grade possible. We will once again resume our Period 6 sessions in January for all Year 11 students and will be adding additional sessions for students, both virtually and in person, on Saturdays and during the half term break, where needed; we will provide more details in the new year. We have also renewed the licence for GCSE Pod which is a great resource for students to use for learning and revision in all subjects. Please ask your child to explore this web-based resource further <https://www.trenthamacademy.co.uk/student-resources/>

When the Department for Education releases further detail in the new year, we will share this with you as soon as it is available.

We look forward to seeing you all for our videoconferencing parents' evenings next week.

Yours sincerely



Mrs E J Wagg
Deputy Headteacher

