

19th August 2020

Dear students, parents and carers

Please find attached some information from Mrs Feast relating to GCSE results tomorrow. We wanted to give you this now so that you have time to read it in advance, and especially because this is such an unusual year. Apologies if you are trying to take your minds off things today and we have interrupted that!

You will know by now that the government has now decided to abandon the statistical model it was using and instead students will receive their Centre Assessed Grade (CAG) as their official result. This is good news for Year 11 students because it means that a significant number have been given the 'benefit of the doubt' and will have received a higher grade than they likely would have if the government algorithm had been applied as planned.

As you also know, we had already committed to accepting CAGs for entry to Lymm High Sixth Form because we did not think it would have been right to see anyone miss out as a result of such an impersonal, statistical process. The vast majority of you who applied will therefore find that you will be able to come to the Sixth Form to study the courses of your choice. We understand that this is not the only thing that matters, but it is fair to say that the most important thing is securing grades that allow you to take the next steps in education or employment.

On a slightly different note, I have tried to steer clear of saying publicly anything very political over the past few months but I cannot pretend to be anything other than outraged by the way the government has handled the issue of A levels results. Regardless of the difficulties presented by the need to cancel exams because of Covid-19, most of the problems we have seen in the last few days were entirely predictable and avoidable, yet more or less every step the government has taken has simply made things worse in terms of the impact on the feelings of the poor young people concerned. It has also put a huge amount of unnecessary pressure on schools when trying to support these young people and communicate accurately with them and their families; the government's habit of changing its mind and making announcements or even just leaking information to the press before giving schools any official information has made this especially challenging. I really do feel for any student in an exam year group at the moment.

The change to accepting CAGs for GCSE grades is certainly welcome and will avoid much of the stress that Year 13 students are going through but it certainly does not mean things will be perfect and there are still bound to be individual cases where Year 11 students receive grades in one or two subjects that they feel do not accurately reflect what they would have got had they sat the exams. We have masses of sympathy for anyone caught in this position; it is the not knowing for certain that makes this year so difficult.

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At the same time, we ask for your understanding of our position. Everyone in the school has done their very best to ensure that the CAGs we submitted were as fair as they could be under the circumstances. They were entered in good faith, and on the understanding that they would be moderated by a statistical model used by the exam boards. As it happens, in common with most schools, we did submit grades that were on the optimistic side overall – albeit within the realms of what the data told us was reasonable. However, the bottom line is that it is always impossible to predict with 100% accuracy what grade any individual student will get in any given exam and none of us are pretending this is an ideal way of awarding grades. As I say, I would be grateful if you remain understanding of this if you are tempted to complain about any grade you have been awarded.

I shall finish on a positive and focus on the fact that the grades being issued tomorrow are, at the overall level, excellent. Our GCSE performance last year put us in the top few percent of the whole country and the results students will get tomorrow are significantly higher even than those. The reason those results are so good is because the students deserve them; they have worked hard over the past few years and should be prepared to celebrate just as hard as they would be doing in a normal year.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Williams', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Gwyn Williams



Summer Exam Results 2020

Student Guide

Please read the guide below carefully, prior to collecting/receiving your results. This document contains very important information regarding how your results have been awarded this year, along with advice and guidance for your next steps.

How have my grades been awarded?

As you may be aware, there have been a number of changes over the last couple of days regarding the awarding of examination results this year. Originally, due to the unprecedented school closure, students who were entered for an external examination in the summer were going to be awarded a calculated grade. This calculated grade was to be based on the government's statistical algorithm in order to standardise results nationally.

However, following the outcome of A level results last week, the process has been changed. This means that you will now be receiving a centre assessed grade (CAG) which has been determined by school as the most likely grade that you would have achieved had the exams gone ahead. Grades have been based on the professional judgements of your teachers and have incorporated a range of evidence including mock exams, non-exam assessment, homework assignments and any other record of your performance over the course of study. All results were agreed through our internal quality assurance process and are therefore not the sole responsibility of any individual teacher.

Headteachers nationally were asked to be judicious and to exercise 'moral leadership' in allocation of grades and not take the opportunity to over-inflate outcomes. As noted in our previous communication, to avoid schools over inflating their results, national guidance made it clear that the school's previous data would be taken into consideration.

I have received my grades and have met the requirements to move onto to my post 16 destination, what are my next steps?

If you have met your course requirements and are planning on remaining with us for Sixth Form, please read the enrolment documents from Mrs Jennings very carefully. These will be in your results envelope, along with an enrolment link which has been sent to your school email account. If you are planning on joining a different Sixth Form or college from September, please contact them for further guidance on their enrolment process.

I am unhappy with my results, what should I do?

Although you may not feel as invested in these results as you might have had you taken the exams, our advice is to treat your grades primarily as a stepping stone to the next stage in your educational or employment journey. If your results are slightly lower than you feel you could have achieved, they may still be good enough to get you onto the pathway you want for next year – and this is probably the most important thing.

If you are unable to get onto your chosen course, please come and see us in school. Details of support will be available on results day, whether you are wanting to stay on for Lymm High Sixth Form or go elsewhere next year. Our careers advisor will be based in the library to help with any immediate queries regarding post 16 options on results day.

There is also an opportunity to take exams in the autumn. Please see the information below if you are considering this. We will be available in the first couple of weeks of September to discuss this with you individually if you need support in making any decisions.

Can I appeal my results if I think they should have been higher?

Put simply, Ofqual and the government have made it clear that disagreement with the grades awarded **does not** constitute grounds for an appeal. The government reasoning for this is that any appeal would have to be undertaken by someone better placed than your teachers to judge your likely grade if exams had taken place – in the unique circumstances of this summer, the government do not believe there is such a person.

We really do sympathise with you all this year, as you didn't have that opportunity to showcase your hard work by sitting the exams in the summer. Awarding 'most likely' grades has been a really difficult undertaking by your teachers, and whilst your teachers have taken a range of evidence into consideration, in reality nobody can predict or suggest exactly what you would have achieved.

If you do have any queries, please contact Mrs Feast (efeast@lymmhigh.org.uk) clearly stating your name and query in the subject line of the email. Please note that, for GDPR reasons, any queries regarding examination results must come from students directly.

Please see the links below for Ofqual's official documents relating to GCSE exam grading:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/statement-from-roger-taylor-chair-ofqual>

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/909645/Student_Guide_Summer_2020_20200814_1157_access.pdf

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/909525/Information_for_students_about_malpractice_20200814_1218_-_access.pdf

Autumn Examination Series

The autumn exam series is an opportunity for students who either were unable to receive a centre assessed grade in the summer, or who want to try to improve their grade, to sit their exams.

Our general feeling is that sitting examinations in the autumn term will not be appropriate in the vast majority of cases; doing so is likely to impact new courses of study and we believe most of you will be better off focusing on these rather than preparing for exams. Remember, even if your results are slightly lower than you feel you could have achieved, they may still be good enough to get you onto your chosen A level, BTEC course or apprenticeship etc.

We have listed some FAQs below which you may find useful in supporting any decisions that you need to make regarding re-sitting any GCSE examinations in autumn.

If I take exams in the autumn will I still be able to start my college course?

You should speak to the relevant institution directly as they make their own admission decisions. In many cases, students who sit these examinations will be looking at starting their college courses/further studies in the following autumn - 2021. An exception to this is where a course has a January or February start date and, in this case, you may be able to start right away. The best advice is to contact your chosen destination for specific information.

Do I have to sit exams in all of my subjects?

No. You can choose to take as many subjects in the autumn as you want to. But if you want to take a particular subject, you will need to take all the exam papers in that subject.

Which grade will stand if I sit the exams?

If you choose to take exams in the autumn or next summer and achieve a different grade from the grade you received this summer, you will be able to use the higher of the 2 grades to show to universities, colleges and employers in future.

Will the number or format of the exam papers be different?

No. You will have the same number of exams in each subject and they will be in the same format as the summer 2020 exams would have been. However, there will not be any non-exam assessment, except in art & design.

Will the non-exam assessment I have done count towards my grade?

No. The autumn results will be based on your exam performance alone, there will be no non-exam assessment and results from previous non-exam assessment will not carry over. In art & design, grades will be based on your performance in a new task, set and marked by the exam board and taken under the normal supervised conditions.

Who will enter me for the exams?

The Department for Education has confirmed that the school or college that entered you for exams in the summer is responsible for entering you in the autumn. This includes private candidates (where they made summer exam entries by 20 March). But if this is not convenient (for example, if you've moved to another part of the country), your school or college can agree other arrangements on your behalf. The exception to this is if you are moving school or college in the autumn and will be continuing to study English or maths because you achieved a grade 3 or below. In that case you should speak to your new school or college who will arrange entries for you.

Can I enter the autumn series if I wasn't entered this summer?

No. Only students who had entered for the summer exams and students who the exam board believes had intended to enter for those exams can enter in the autumn series. Students who would normally be entitled to take GCSEs in English language and maths in November (usually resitting students) will also be able to take exams in those subjects.

If I opt to sit one or more of my examinations in autumn, will I be provided with revision sessions?

This depends on a number of factors, particularly the numbers of students choosing to take their exams and the subjects they are sitting exams in. Details will be made available nearer to the time of the exams. We will certainly be able to provide revision materials if you have lost any from the summer, but we need to be honest at this stage and say that it is unlikely there will be many revision sessions available in most cases because teachers will be so busy trying to help students in the new Year 11 and 13 catch up on any lost learning from the lockdown. In reality, it will be down to you to make sure that you revise thoroughly so that you are fully prepared for the exams.

Will I have to pay to sit any of my examinations in autumn?

In most cases the school will pay for this. More information regarding this will be released in September.

If I do want to sit any of my examinations in autumn, who should I contact?

If you are considering sitting any exams in the autumn, forms will be available for you to download and complete from the school website. Please note that we strongly recommend you have a conversation with Mrs Feast before completing any forms to sit exams in the autumn. This will allow us to consider your options carefully and on an individual basis. The deadline for entries will be 14th September 2020 and so there is no immediate rush to make this decision. We can finalise exam entries for the autumn exam series in first week back in September.