

3 April 2020

## Response to Ofqual's Update regarding Public Examinations Summer 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope you and your families are well. Thank you and your children for the overwhelmingly positive engagement with remote learning before the break. It speaks volumes for the character of our community.

Today, the government, via Ofqual, published its advice regarding Public Examination Grades for this summer. This includes an advisory letter for parents and students that I attach in full. The letter explains the approach that will be taken nationally to awarding grades. Please do read it, and share it with your children.

College leaders met today. This is new news and as we have consistently sought to do throughout this time of anxiety, we will take time to digest it properly and discuss all possible pathways and options available to you, your children, and us. We remain committed to sharing with you our thinking and advice as it evolves and develops. In that spirit, we offer the following additional St Dunstan's specific steers alongside the national guidance as an initial response:

1. This new information makes it clear that Exam Boards expect schools to view academic data that pre-dates school closure as a sufficient basis for the prediction of grade outcomes, alongside knowledge of individual children's particular circumstances and trajectories. It has also been made clear that school predictions, which cannot be disclosed to students or parents, will be moderated nationally to ensure fairness. It is right and proper, therefore, for the College to change its default approach from one of asking students to continue preparing for assessments, to one of a broader educational opportunity. Our position adopted last term allows us to make this shift of policy without having committed students or staff to any fixed timetable of new 'mock exams'. It also allows us to support any student who still feels they may wish to generate new attainment data to help their prediction (see points 2 and 3 below). Crucially, however, the College wants to convey to you that there is no longer any blanket expectation on students to undertake revision or completion of tasks associated with public examination courses. I am sure this will be a source of great relief for many of you, and we are very happy to be able to change course in this way based on the new information we now have.
2. The Ofqual advice makes it clear that school predictions will not be submitted until at least the end of May, leaving time in which individual students might *choose* to generate improved academic data for themselves. We will offer this opportunity to those who wish to take it, without it being enforced upon anyone. Further guidance will be provided before the start of term, but any student who wants to add academic data to their existing

profile will be supported to do so via opportunities for remotely set, timed, and supervised assessments. Outcomes will not be used to lower predictions, but we see no harm based on what we now know in offering the potential for students to add to an academic picture where a student feels they have thus far not demonstrated of their best in timed assessment work. Details of how these opportunities will be given will be finalised before term starts and they would not begin until at least the second week of term, as set out in our original planning. However, we are keen to offer this opportunity to those who wish to take it, and subject to any further unexpected changes to the landscape we are operating within.

3. Coursework and Non-Examined Assessments. The new guidance makes it clear that students should not be required by schools to complete these tasks if they are currently unfinished. We will not ask any student to do so, therefore. However, if any student wants to complete as yet unfinished coursework, either for the academic satisfaction of completing a task they have invested so much time in already, or so that its outcome might potentially act as supportive evidence to a prediction, they are entitled and encouraged to do so. This is, however, a choice and not a requirement.
4. Points 2 and 3 above offer students choice over next steps. We appreciate that often what students want is to be told what to do by staff. As a College we cannot offer guarantees over how data generated by taking these opportunities might be viewed by exam boards, but we recommend this option to those for whom there is a strong sense that attainment over the last year and a half significantly misrepresents their potential. If a student is contemplating this option, please do undertake the necessary revision over Easter and seek advice from your teacher at the start of term. Ahead of that time, and if you have any queries, please direct them to the relevant Head of Section. If the situation changes at a national or Ofqual level, we will issue new advice accordingly, of course.
5. In light of the move away from exam preparation, the focus of teacher planning for Years 11 and 13 will be high quality educational and enrichment programmes that have clear benefit for the next phases of the students' education and lives. The work to generate and resource this kind of programme has already begun and details will be shared before the start of term. A key focus for Year 11 will be preparation for A Level study, both in terms of the subject courses expecting to be taken, and the study skills required to make the leap. For Year 13, there will be a programme that specifically supports transition out of school and into a wider world including University and/or Employment. These are very significant leaps and ones that schools are not normally afforded much time to support students with. For both Year 11 and Year 13, therefore, the current situation actually affords us opportunities to better prepare your children for the next stages of their educational and development. Notwithstanding the challenges we are all facing, this is an exciting opportunity and one that we expect and encourage the students to engage with fully. It will occupy them intellectually and academically, support them pastorally and mentally, and improve their transition into the next phase of their lives. Their '*albam exorna*' journey at the College may be different to that of others with the absence of public examinations, but will also be exceptional as a result of the addition of unprecedented levels of support for these crucial transitions.

6. College teaching staff have been sent this letter also, and will direct their planning for next term accordingly. Our guidance and training of them, alongside the facilitation of meetings to share ideas and best practice, will take place over the next two weeks. All of the above information adds to the invaluable feedback we have from you, your children, and staff in regard to our remote learning provision. Part of our planning agenda, and also our commitment to providing the best possible education we can, will be to review the way we support remote learning in light of today's news alongside that feedback. Please do be reassured that more information will be shared with you and your children before the start of next term outlining the practical details of what remote learning in the Trinity Term will look like. You will appreciate and understand, of course, that the College is reacting and adapting to the environment as much as the children and families are, and we are committed to taking and giving the time to prepare robustly.

Thank you once again for your engagement and support during these unprecedented times. We remain very positive about the educational outcomes that can be achieved this summer, and in so much more than just grade terms. Across the Trinity Term we will not only be offering the enrichment programme outlined above, but clearly a lot of 'behind the scenes' work will be being undertaken by staff across the organisation to prepare our submission of data for your child in time for the May/June deadlines when finalised by Ofqual. I know that you will appreciate the work that must go into this process, planning, and delivery and give you our reassurance that it now begins in earnest in response to the new information we have, and it will adapt to any new or more detailed requirements provided by Exam Boards or Ofqual over the coming weeks.

Please do share this letter with your children and discuss it with them. Please do, also, support them to rest and enjoy hobbies or activities for their own sake amidst this wider, complex and challenging educational context.

Yours sincerely,

Mr A Johnson  
**Deputy Head (Academic)**