

10th November 2020

Dear Parents and Guardians

Minister for Education's announcement regarding qualifications in summer 2021

The Minister for Education has confirmed Wales' approach for qualifications in 2021 and her decision that there will be no end of year exams for learners taking GCSEs, AS levels or A levels. The Minister has made this decision based on fairness. Students will have varied time in school and college because of the pandemic. As such, it is impossible to guarantee a level playing field for exams to take place.

In her announcement to school leaders, the Minister has issued the following information.

"Instead of exams, we intend to work with schools and colleges to take forward teacher-managed assessments.

These should include assessments that will be externally set and marked but delivered within a classroom environment under teacher supervision.

My expectation is that these will form the basis for centre-based outcomes which will be linked to an agreed national approach to provide consistency across Wales.

I have heard first-hand from many learners about how worried they are about the prospect of taking exams and the pressure they feel under to get through as much course content as possible.

I have been clear from the beginning that my over-riding priority for any approach to qualifications in 2021 is to ensure that learners in exam years develop the knowledge, skills, and experience that they need to confidently progress to their next steps – whether that is employment, training or further and higher education.

Removing exams frees up the entire summer term which is normally focused on preparing for and sitting exams, for additional teaching and learning.

A Design and Delivery Advisory Group has been set up and will meet this week. The proposed approach to centre-based outcomes, an appeal process and arrangements for private candidates, will be developed by this group, involving school and college leaders, supported by Welsh Government, and advised by Qualifications Wales and WJEC.

My intention is for this work to be finalised in December so that guidance and supporting materials can be in place for the start of the spring term.

We have engaged with universities across the UK and have been assured that this decision will not disadvantage Welsh learners as long as our alternative arrangements are robust and transparent, and I am confident that they will be.

The situation for Vocational Qualifications is more complex and will require extra work. Welsh Government officials will continue to support Qualifications Wales as they work closely with other regulators to ensure a pragmatic approach that works in learners' interests and gives them clarity about the way forward."

As a school we will be working closely with the local authority and awarding bodies to plan strategically for the new arrangements as they are rolled out. We will be reviewing all aspects of our planning for the year ahead, including the windows for assessments. use of mock examination and the general recovery of learning for the key GCSE, AS and A-Level cohorts.

We will keep students and staff updated as the plans for the year ahead become clearer.

For the Minister's full statement, please follow this link to the Welsh Government's website.

Kind regards,

Sarah Parry

Headteacher