

Friday 25th June 2021

Dear Parents

Re Awarding of grades / Appeals process Summer 2021

Last Friday the school completed the submission of grades to the awarding bodies. This has been a challenging process for all schools and I am extremely proud of the way our staff have implemented this process and have every confidence in the rigour of the system applied at Severn Vale and of the professionalism of our staff throughout the process.

Given grades have now been finally submitted, it seemed an opportune time to provide some key information to parents and students. The information below aims to explain the methods used by the school to grade students in their GCSEs and other vocational qualifications this summer. It also provides details of how students can appeal the grades award and what are acceptable grounds for an appeal.

How has my child been graded this year?

Grades for GCSEs and most other qualifications will be based on a process involving teacher assessment against national standards, internal quality assurance, and external quality assurance by the exam boards.

At Severn Vale, we have used a range of evidence to reach a holistic judgement for each student. This includes formal assessments sat under exam conditions, a selection of identified assessments taken in class and non-exam assessment (coursework) and practical performance in some subjects.

You can read our **SVS Centre Policy 2021**, which has been approved by the exam boards [here](#). This details the approach we have taken as a school.

Why have there been so many assessments when exams were cancelled?

National exams were cancelled in January, and all schools had flexibility about how to arrive at a fair and robust grade for each student.

Since our students returned to school after the lockdown, we have been using exam-style assessments, drawing on the assessment materials provided by exam boards, as we think this will produce the most reliable, and therefore fairest, evidence.

What evidence has been used in each subject?

Our Centre Policy details the high-level approach we are taking as a school. Your child's subject teacher will have already let students know what evidence is being used for the year group. You can find the **Assessment Objective Record** information [here](#)

My child usually has access arrangements (e.g. extra time) in exams. Have they this year?

If a student is eligible for any sort of access arrangements as part of their SEND provision, then they have been given it in the assessments we have carried out.

If a student who is eligible for access arrangements did not have them for a particular assessment that is being used to inform their grade, then they can raise this with the school by contacting Mr Connor. A record of how this is responded to will be made. This could include using an alternative piece of evidence, or adjusting the marks for that assessment.

Can we know the grade submitted?

No, we are legally obliged not to let students or parents know their submitted grade before results day.

In some subjects, students may receive grades or marks for certain assessments that may count towards their grades; but this is at the department's discretion. Students do not have an automatic right to know their grades or marks in a subject's assessment, just because they've been told marks in another assessment.

The assessments you're doing are different from another school. How is this fair?

Schools have been given a lot of flexibility in how they decide a holistic teacher assessed grade this summer. This means that it's likely the assessments will look different in different schools, even ones in the same area. Because students should only be assessed on what they have been taught, to account for variations in lost learning due to the pandemic, the range of evidence will differ between schools, and even between students within our school.

Our approach has been approved by the exam boards; but many different approaches have also been approved. This does not mean one approach is better than the other.

How have we ensured judgements are accurate, appropriate and consistent

We have every confidence in the integrity, professionalism and impartiality of our staff. Staff have undergone objectivity and bias training. This is detailed in our Centre Policy, which has been approved by the exam boards.

All of the grades will be signed off by two members of staff, including the subject leader. All grades will be signed off by the head of centre.

We will also have to send a sample of work into the exam boards, ensuring that grades are fair and accurate.

What is exam malpractice?

Exam malpractice this year includes students fabricating evidence (e.g. claiming plagiarised work is their own), they or their parents placing undue pressure on teachers to submit a certain grade, as well as teachers fabricating evidence.

If malpractice is proven, the exam boards may decide to withhold the qualification altogether.

Our approach to authenticating evidence is set out in our Centre Policy.

How can I appeal?

If your child is unhappy with their grade this summer, they will have the opportunity to resit all GCSEs in the autumn. Students should speak to Mr Connor about entering the autumn series.

There is also the option to appeal a grade on the following grounds:

- Administrative error – you think the school has submitted the wrong grade for you
- Procedural error- you think the school did not follow our process correctly
- Error of academic judgement – you do not think the grade submitted reflects a reasonable judgement on either the evidence that was used, or the grade arrived at.

Please note that Simon Lebus, Ofqual’s interim chief regulator has been very clear that appeals to exam boards over grades issued this summer will have a “very high” threshold to meet, and there will be no scope for “speculative appeals”.

All appeals will first be processed as a centre review. Following the outcome of centre review, students can choose to take forward an appeal to the exam board(s), which we will do on their behalf. In order to request a centre review please follow these steps on Results Day:

1. Collect results and review
2. Re-read this document which will also be available on the day.
3. If you still have a question regarding appeals please see Mr Connor on results day. He will be available **in the Main Hall between 10.00 – 1.00pm.**
4. If following a conversation with Mr Connor you feel you would like to proceed with a centre review, please complete the **request for a centre review** which is available [here](#).

Please note that at any stage of the appeals process a student’s grade(s) could go up or down.

If the appeal process decides that the submitted grade was too high, students will **not** be able to keep the higher grade. We will require students to sign a declaration saying that understand this before they submit an appeal.

My child has work at a higher grade than the work used as evidence. Can they appeal?

Students have already been told what evidence is being used. If they want to raise any mitigating circumstances about this, they should do so as above. Just having a higher-graded essay is not, in itself, grounds for mitigating circumstances – although this request will be recorded.

When it comes to appeals, exam boards will be considering whether any teacher acting reasonably could have used the same evidence and reached the same judgement. This is different to whether other alternatives would have been equally as valid.

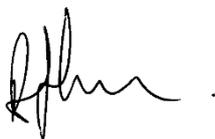
Timetable for appeals

Date	
12 th August 2021	<p>Results Day</p> <p>Review results and see Mr Connor if you have specific concerns.</p> <p>Access request for a centre review from the school's website here</p>
3 rd September	<p>Deadline for the return of request for a centre review form.</p> <p>Please endeavour to return your request for a centre review form as early as possible.</p>
10 th September	<p>Deadline for school to complete centre reviews.</p> <p>If you are unhappy with the outcome of the centre review and wish to appeal to the Awarding Organisation (Exam Board), please request a copy of the Appeal to Awarding Organisation form from the school and return no later than 17th September.</p>
17 th September	<p>Deadline for the return of the Appeal to Awarding Organisation form.</p> <p>Last date upon which the school can submit an appeal to the Awarding Organisations.</p>

I do hope that that information provided answers any questions you may have. If you have any general queries please feel free to contact Mr Connor in the first instance.

I look forward to seeing all of the students on results day on Thursday 12th August.

Yours sincerely



R Johnson
Headteacher