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Dear Parents/Carers and Students in Years 11 and 13,

I am writing to update you regarding the Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs) for students in Years 11 and 13. In this letter, you will be able to read:

- a) an overview of how grades have been decided;
- b) how to appeal in the summer once you have received the grades.

Unlike last year, appeals can be made to a school should you feel the grade is incorrect. However, there are strict procedures to follow should this be the case. Very importantly, you do need to be aware from the outset that grades can be adjusted **down** as well as up during an appeals process.

How were exam grades decided this year?

Grades this summer are based on Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs). TAGs were submitted to the exam boards by us as a holistic assessment of students' performance in a subject, following a rigorous process of assessment, moderation and quality assurance. We have worked within faculties, across the Trust and the Cotswold Edge Sixth Form with final, detailed checking by the Senior Team to scrutinise and quality assure our systems and grades. We have now submitted a selection of pieces of work for a number of students to the exam board AQA who are the named exam board for our region. The students and subjects chosen for this process were specified by AQA. All the grades we have uploaded to the relevant exam boards are in the process of being checked.

In some cases, an exam board could ask us to submit an alternative grade once they have reviewed the original grades we have uploaded. However, any changes to the original grades will be done by teachers or reviewers; this year no grades will be changed as a result of an algorithm which nationally caused a great deal of disquiet last year.

We have previously communicated with you the list of evidence used by each subject to decide the TAG. For Year 11 students, this information was sent home on 18th May and for Year 13 students, this was communicated across Cotswold Edge in April. These letters can be found on the website should you wish to review this again. For a very small number of students, we have used additional evidence where there was insufficient pieces of work owing, for example, to low attendance because of a high level of sickness absence. This has been important because no student should be disadvantaged because of complex, personal circumstances.

Due to our close working relationships with parents/carers and students, we believe we are aware of exceptional circumstances. However, if you feel we should have further information, please do alert us to ensure we have all relevant facts now rather than leave it until August. You should contact the relevant head of House as a matter of urgency should you feel this is necessary. Please do not ask for the TAGs we have submitted to the exam boards as we are not allowed to release this information prior to results days.

What do I do if I'm not happy with the published grades?

All students have the opportunity to appeal their grade if they meet the eligibility criteria (see below). It is important to note that an appeal may result in a grade being lowered, staying the same, or going up. If a



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student puts in an appeal and their grade is lowered, they will receive the lower mark and this will not be able to be changed back.

There is also the option to resit GCSEs, A levels and some AS levels in the autumn, which may be preferable to some students. The design, content and assessment of these papers will be the same as in a normal year.

What are the grounds for appeal?

There are four main grounds for appeal, as dictated by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ). They are:

- You think we have made an **administrative error**: an example of this would be putting the wrong information into a spreadsheet.
- You think we have made a **procedural error**: this means we haven't properly followed our own process, as approved by the exam board. An example of this would be where you've been told you should have received extra time for assessments but this wasn't given in a certain subject.
- You think the **academic judgement on the selection of evidence was unreasonable**: you think the evidence used to decide a grade was not reasonable.
- You think the **academic judgement on the grade you were given was unreasonable**.

What does 'unreasonable' mean?

'Unreasonable' in this context means that a teacher acting unreasonably could have selected the same evidence and reported a *different* grade. However, it also means that just because other forms of evidence could have been equally valid to use, the selection of evidence is *not* unreasonable. Because of the flexibility of the approach this year, every school and college will have used different forms of evidence which has enabled all schools/colleges to respond to their local context eg. in some parts of the country, year group bubbles had to self-isolate for many weeks of the year and missed a lot of on-site teaching. These students should not be disadvantaged due to this set of circumstances.

It also means that the independent reviewers, external to the school, will **not** remark or grade students' evidence. Instead, they will look to see whether any teacher acting *reasonably* could have arrived at the same grade.

What will be the outcome of an appeal?

At either stage of the appeals process (see below, 'What are the two stages of an appeal?'), a student's grade may go up, stay the same or go down. When placing an appeal, the student will have to sign a declaration saying that they accept the fact their grade may go down and they may get a lower grade than their original TAG. An appeal will not be able to be submitted without the student's signature.

What is a priority appeal?

Priority appeals are for **Post 16 students only** and will be handled more quickly than other appeals, where possible before the advisory UCAS deadline of 8th September.

Priority appeals will only be open to **A level students starting university this autumn, who have missed out on the conditions of their firm or insurance offer**. If you decided not to confirm a firm conditional offer and to go through clearing instead, JCQ cannot offer you a priority appeal. Unfortunately, JCQ cannot offer priority appeals for GCSE students.

When making a priority appeal, students will have to include their UCAS number so it can be confirmed that it is a genuine priority appeal.

What should I do if I don't get into my first choice of university?

Firstly, don't panic. Speak to Miss Hilleard or Mr Milburn about your options. You may wish to go through clearing or, sit the autumn exams or summer exams next year to try to improve your grade.

If you are going to appeal your grade, you must let your university know you are appealing. They will then let you know whether they will hold a place for you pending the outcome of an appeal (note that universities **are not** obliged to hold a place for you; this is at their discretion).

What should I do before appealing?

Students must read the JCQ Student and Parent guide before appealing which can be found [here](#). You are also advised to check the JCQ website prior to lodging an appeal in case there is updated guidance.

We are unlikely to be able to offer much advice or opinion on the likely success of an appeal this summer as we would in normal years, as we have already moderated and quality assured all the grades ourselves and this whole process is new to everyone.

What are the two stages of an appeal?

All appeals, on any of the grounds above, must first go through a **centre review**. At this stage, we will check for any administrative errors and check that our policies and procedures were followed correctly. Our policy has already been approved by the exam boards, so we are only ensuring that we followed this properly. The outcome of the centre review will be communicated to students when made. At the centre review stage, if we find that a grade should go up or down, we will ask the exam board to change it. They will then consider this request.

Following the outcome of a centre review, students may still choose to pursue an **awarding organisation appeal**. You will need to fill in [this form](#), which we will then send on your behalf to the exam boards. Students and parents/carers cannot send appeals directly to the exam board themselves – it must come from us.

The outcome of the awarding organisation appeal will be communicated to students when made.

How do I make an appeal?

The very first thing to do is communicate with us that you are concerned about a grade. There is a dedicated school email address which will be live after results days for students and/or parents/carers to use for this purpose. Email: summerappeals21@chippingsodburyschool.com from Tuesday 10th August for Year 13 students and from Thursday 2nd September for Year 11 and 10 students. Please note, Year 11/10 appeals will not begin until early September once the school term has started. A member of staff will reply to the email to discuss the concern.

Following a discussion, should you feel it is appropriate to submit a formal appeal, students should fill in the first section of the JCQ form [here](#) and submit it to the dedicated email address above. Please note, we will be working on Year 13 appeals as a matter of urgency in August to support students accessing the most appropriate university course as directed by JCQ.

What are the deadlines for priority appeals?

Year 13 - the suggested deadline for requesting a priority appeal is **16th August** (students cannot appeal before results day on 10th August).

We will attempt to complete the centre review by **20th August***. If students wish to progress this to an awarding organisation appeal, they must send the completed form to us by **23rd August** for priority appeals.

*At both stages of the appeals process, there may be the need for specialist, expert knowledge (e.g. subject teachers, SEND knowledge). This may not be possible in August. In such cases, we may have to wait until the start of term, but priority appeals will still be treated as a priority.

What are the deadlines for non-priority appeals?

Non-priority appeals are any A levels, GCSEs or vocational qualifications, where a firm or insurance university place is not pending including all those results for **Year 11 and 10** students.

The deadline for submitting a centre review is **3rd September**; and the deadline for submitting an awarding organisation appeal is **10th September**. However, appeals received after these dates may still be considered.

The school knows the exam grades. Why can't you tell us? What if you know we haven't met our university conditional offer?

We are forbidden from disclosing the Teacher Assessed Grades to any third party, including students and parents/carers, until results days. Any teacher or member of staff who does this is committing exam malpractice and it will have to be reported. Although students are likely to be aware of their grades for different pieces of evidence, we cannot disclose the final submitted TAG.

During the external quality assurance process currently taking place, our submitted TAGs may be moved up or down (although this will always be done by human beings, not by an algorithm).

We only know what a student's conditional offer is if they have chosen to share that information with us. It has not formed part of our objective grading of students. Where we do know this information, we must not let students know their submitted TAGs, even if they haven't met the conditions of their offer.

What will happen on results days?

At the time of writing, we are intending to host our results days on-site and in person. We will communicate the details in due course when we know what, if any restrictions are still in place. There will be a number of members of staff in school on both days to discuss results and offer advice should it be required. Year 11 students intending to join the Sixth Form will be able to register and Year 13 students will be able to discuss their destinations and receive advice should initial plans have changed.

I appreciate there is a great deal of information in this letter to read and comprehend. It is new to us all and does take some time to understand. We are establishing a section on the 'home page pop up' of the website as a repository for all relevant communication including the policy and the forms which will have to be used should you feel it appropriate to appeal against a grade this summer. This letter will also stay on the website in the same place throughout the summer should you need to refer to it in the forthcoming weeks.

Please do not hesitate to contact us in school via the relevant Head of House should you wish to discuss this matter further at this stage.

Yours sincerely,



Katherine Turner
Headteacher