

# Year 11 FAQ – 20 January 2021

We are sure you will have many questions regarding the government proposals for the awarding of grades this summer. They are purely proposals at present and the eventual government instructions may differ, but we have tried to set out answers as clearly as we currently can to some of the key questions we think you might have.

**1. We think that not everyone will have been able to maintain full exam conditions in the mocks, how has that been dealt with?**

Any grades achieved in exams sat at home obviously cannot be treated in the same way as grades achieved in full exam conditions at school. Being moved to the home setting, the mocks were primarily an opportunity for pupils to test their knowledge and reflect on their experience so they can be even better prepared for the tests that lie ahead. That will of course have been most effective for pupils who relied entirely on their own learning and memory.

Dr Pyne has prepared Mock Evaluation booklets for the pupils so they can record their reflections and their teachers will be going through the papers with them in class. Teachers are marking the work that has been submitted and where they have suspicions of malpractice, they are discussing it with the pupils concerned and may also contact home.

**2. When will we receive the grades for the mocks? How will the online Parents' Evening work?**

The Year 11 Mock Reports will be issued to you on Wednesday 3 February, the day before the Year 11 Parents' Evening on Thursday 4 February. The Parents' Evening will take place online using Teams. You will be sent a link to book in with your child's teachers and the system will generate links for you to access each meeting. We have used it for a number of events now very successfully and we hope you enjoy the experience and convenience of being able to meet with the teachers from the comfort of your own home. Please make sure that you and your son or daughter attend together.

**3. Are the government proposing that teachers award grades in the same as they did last summer?**

No, this year the government proposals are asking for something slightly different. Last year teachers were asked to imagine what would have happened had the pupil sat the exam. This year, the proposals suggest that teachers grade pupils based on 'demonstrated knowledge, understanding and skills'. This difference is rooted in the government's recognition that the current Year 11 and Upper Sixth Pupils' education has been disrupted for longer than last year's exam groups. They are proposing that grades this year should **not** be based on full coverage of the specification (see next question).

**4. If they happen, what exactly are these proposed externally set tests likely to look like? Will they cover the whole course? Have we covered enough of the specification?**

We don't yet know the precise details of the tests but please be reassured that we are well ahead of the v

ast majority of schools in the country in terms of what we have been able to cover during lockdown.

Heads of Department have already been working on reducing their specification coverage to generate even more time to review and consolidate material that has already been covered. If the tests go ahead, as soon as we hear from the Exam Boards what the tests will cover, we will immediately review our plans to ensure that we are fully focussed on preparing the pupils as best as possible for them.

The proposals make it explicitly clear that whatever tests are set, they must give pupils the opportunity to demonstrate that they are able to work at the highest level so all of our pupils will be able to achieve the grade they deserve.

**5. Will the proposed tests be compulsory?**

We don't yet know. This is raised as a question in the consultation. We will have to wait and see what the government's ultimate decision is. If we are presented with a choice, we will review the options and communicate to pupils and parents our proposals.

**6. Will children who have Access Arrangements have their usual arrangements if these tests go ahead?**

The proposals are explicitly based on the assumption that the tests will be done in school. That means we would be able to run the tests as proper external exams, providing all the usual Access Arrangements and support.

**7. What will happen to these tests if we are put into lockdown in May/June?**

If we are placed in lockdown and the tests cannot go ahead as originally planned, the government proposals provide for tests being sat at home. Pupils and those supervising them would have to sign a declaration stating that no unauthorised assistance had been received. We are also evaluating some software that supports maintaining exam conditions remotely.

**8. How will the practical subjects like Art or Drama be examined? What about other NEA?**

The proposals suggest that NEA should be taken account of when deciding the final grades, whether or not it is complete. Departments who use NEA are well on track so will have very good evidence from which to draw their TAG.

**9. Can evidence other than these tests be taken into account when deciding on the TAG?**

Yes. These tests are intended to significantly inform the grade but not determine it. The proposals suggest that more weight should be put on assessments the nearer they are to

the time of the final assessment. The boards will issue guidance on the relative use of different kinds of assessment. As with last year, we expect that evidence gathered in controlled conditions will attract significantly more weight than other non-controlled tests.

**10. What is the external quality assurance that the government refers to? Is there any internal quality assurance?**

The proposals suggest that grades would be internally quality assured first through a process of standardisation within the school. External quality assessment would take place firstly through checking a school's internal quality assurance processes and the secondly through sampling: schools would have to provide evidence of the tests sat and show how they were marked.

**11. I am worried about the impact of these constant changes on my child's wellbeing and motivation. How can the College help with that?**

The welfare of all the pupils is our primary concern and we fully understand the negative impacts of these changes and uncertainty. The Year 11 Tutor Team and the Heads of House are keeping a particularly close eye on the pupils and all teachers are regularly being asked to raise any pastoral or academic concerns. Do please keep in close touch with your child's tutor – there are lots of things that we can do to help if pupils are having difficulty.

Keeping connected through form time, actively engaging in lessons, getting involved in House competitions and keeping the basics in place like good food and hydration, plenty of sleep and regular exercise are all important elements of maintaining wellbeing.

Most importantly, pupils should keep thinking about their goals. Be it securing a place to study in Princethorpe Sixth Form or whatever else the next step may be, staying focussed on that prize and getting the best possible grades they can to make sure they achieve it is crucial to their motivation. As you will see in the next question, we are planning to offer secure places in the Sixth Form similarly to the way we did last year to try to give the pupils extra peace of mind.

**12. Given these changes, how is the process for Sixth Form entry going to work?**

The timeline for the Sixth Form Admissions Process has been delayed very slightly due to the Mocks and Year 11 Parents' Evening being delayed. A final Options confirmation form will be sent out on Friday 5 February and we will ask for you to confirm your choices and submit any scholarship applications by Monday 8 February.

We will look carefully at all the chosen subjects. If the subjects look sensible, we will proceed on with the process. If pupils have selected subjects that look likely to be problematic, we will get in touch with you directly to discuss possible alternatives.

Most importantly, we aim to offer secure places in the Sixth Form in the week beginning Monday 22 March **so you can be sure that you have your place**. These offers will guarantee your place in the Sixth Form. Any specific course requirements would still apply (you would need a Level 7 in Spanish to continue with it at A-level, for example) so pupils who didn't quite get the required grades for a particular subject will be supported in finding alternatives.

**13. What is going to be put in place for Year 11 once the exams are over? Are they going to have bridging courses to help them prepare for their next steps? If they have covered a reduced specification will that disadvantage them for A-level?**

The bridging courses that we created last year were a great success and we intend to follow a similar approach this year, probably for around three weeks after the summer half term. They proved to be very useful for the pupils in preparing them for their next steps and will also allow them to address any gaps which have arisen through any reduction of the specification this year.

**14. You mentioned that the pupils would get a couple of weeks' break; is that still the plan?**

Our original plans included a two-week break for the pupils leading up to the summer half-term. If the external tests now fall in that window of time, it will have to be reviewed. It might be appropriate to include an additional two-weeks' break in the second half of the summer term, perhaps finishing a couple of weeks early, and this is something we will consult upon.

**15. Will term end on 6 July for Year 11?**

As mentioned in the question above, it might be the case that Year 11 pupils would have a few weeks' bridging course following the Summer Half Term and then draw their year to close slightly early to enjoy a very well-earned break.

**16. Will they have a prom? How about hoodies?**

Yes!! Government guidelines permitting, we will do everything we can to make sure that Year 11 can enjoy the usual end of GCSE festivities. Mrs Sharpe and her team are well underway preparing the hoodies and the leavers' books. On Friday 2 July we are planning for the Headmaster's Year 11 Thanksgiving Service which is always a very special event and Monday 5 July is in the diary for the Year 11 Prom. We really look forward to seeing all Year 11 there in their finery!

We hope these FAQs have addressed the key questions you have. If you have any further questions or concerns, do please get in touch; we are here to help.

We are absolutely committed to the pupils getting the best grades they deserve. Whatever arises from the consultation process, we will continue to do all we can to give the pupils the strongest possible support.

Dr Michael Reddish, Deputy Head (Academic)