

FAQ's

Grading of A levels and GCSEs Summer 2021

Generally, how will grades be awarded this summer?

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

The national process defined by the Department for Education and the exams' regulator, Ofqual is as follows:

1. Teachers will assess students against a national standard, which will be defined by the exam boards before the end of March
2. We will submit grades which will be quality assured by the college. This internal quality assurance process will have to be signed off by the exam board to ensure it is rigorous and in line with national standards.
3. Our college results will be quality assured externally by the exam boards, which may include random sampling of our evidence.
4. If the exam boards are confident in our submitted results, then the exam boards will award students their final grades.
5. If students do not think their results are accurate, they will have the right to appeal.

How is the grade awarded?

The grade students achieve will start with an assessment of their performance across a range of evidence. This is against a nationally-defined standard, not the teacher's own opinion. This assessment is then subject to both internal and external quality assurance before the final grade is awarded by the exam body as usual.

This means that media rumours of grade inflation and devalued results are highly exaggerated and your qualifications will be deserved. Overall, it should be no easier or harder for a student to achieve a particular grade this year compared to previous 'normally examined' years.

What about loss of learning / impact of Covid?

This year, teachers will only assess students on content they have been taught – because of the continued disruption of the pandemic. This means students will not be disadvantaged if they have been unable to complete their full course. However, grades can only be submitted on the basis of the evidence we have of your performance, even if that evidence covers less of the course than usual.

This is different to last year as the 'Centre Assessed Grades (CAGs) involved predicting what a student would have done if they had completed the programme.

Will grades be different between different schools and colleges?

No, the standard against which teachers will be assessing students is set nationally by the exam boards. This is the standard that will be used during external quality assurance and appeals to ensure consistency and fairness across the system.

What evidence will be used?

We are able to draw on a range of assessment evidence from across a student's study of the course. This may include coursework, in class assessments, mock exams, and papers set by the exam boards. The exam boards are producing assessment materials and further guidance that should be sent to us at Easter. Different subjects may use different sources of evidence, and there is no requirement for any one type of assessment to be used – it's about a performance across a range of evidence.

What will be our approach at Barnsley College be?

We will form an assessment and grading plan for each subject having considered the guidance and materials from the exam boards at Easter. This will be moderated and approved by college managers and then explained to students

These plans are, subject to guidance, expected to include

- Coursework (None Examined Assessment (NEA))
- Evidence from earlier in the course where it is reliable and valid
- Assessments which will generally take place in class in controlled conditions in April/May. This will make at least some use of provided unseen awarding body questions.
- The weightings of each of the above to be determined on a subject basis according to subject guidance and previous course delivery factors
- Exam access arrangements will be taken into account when assessing students

Will my timetable change and when do we finish?

We will continue with a mixed approach of deliver, where you are asked to be in College you must attend as this means we require more evidence to support your grade. In some instances students will remain with online delivery or this could be a combination of both and will depend on the groups and needs of students.

Grades have to be submitted by 18th June to awarding bodies and therefore to allow a thorough holistic grading, moderation and quality assurance process the majority of GCSE timetables will end at half term at the end of May. (Other courses may continue and your Teacher will inform you if that is the case)

However, you should remain available week commencing 7th & 14th June should it be necessary to complete any additional evidence where required that may be needed to predict overall results.

For A Level learners

The last date students some students will be required on campus is the 11th of June. Academic Coaches will carry out 1to1 exit tutorials and related progression activities over Teams and these are likely to run until Friday 25th June.

Results are scheduled to be published on August 10th for A levels and Applied Generals and August 12th for GCSEs

Can students and parents make the case for why a student should get a higher grade?

Our staff are already using their professional expertise to assess students on the content they have been taught. Teachers are unable to submit higher grades for students unless they have the evidence that they are consistently working at this level.

In 2020, any undue pressure by a student or parent who placed undue pressure on teachers to increase grades was also considered exam malpractice. It is likely to be the same for 2021.

Can students discuss their grades with staff?

Teachers will be able to share which evidence they are using to inform their judgement with students, including marked or graded pieces of work.

However, we are not allowed to disclose final submitted grades we give to the exam board.

You should not attempt to second-guess the grade submitted, as we will be using a range of evidence to inform final judgements - which will not be determined until after spring half term and internal moderation and quality assurance has taken place. Students and parents must not pressure teachers to reveal the grades they are submitting, or to increase the grades, as doing so may be considered exam malpractice.

What should students do to improve their grades?

The best thing you can do is to continue to attend, learn, act on feedback, revise, and read around your subject. The grade will be based on performance, and so outcomes are ultimately in your hands.

The good news is that it is all there to play for: if you faced challenges during lockdown this is retrievable as you will be able to show what you can do in this final part of the academic year.