



**ST. MARY MAGDALENE**

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SECONDARY PHASE

*Excellence through innovation,  
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**FEDERATION EXECUTIVE CO-HEADTEACHERS**

Mrs Claire Harrison and Mrs Victoria Wainwright

**PRINCIPAL**

Mr Razwan Hussain

Dear parent/carer,

I am writing to you with some important information about your child's GCSEs, including changes the government has made to GCSE assessment this year, what we're doing and what you can do to help.

### **Changes announced by the government**

#### **What will be different?**

Last year, GCSE, BTEC and A-Level examinations were cancelled, and students were instead awarded Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs) which were based on the quality of students' work over the year. The government has recently confirmed that in summer 2022 our current Year 11 students will sit exams.

There are also some adaptations in some subjects at GCSE. They include

- A choice of topics on which students will be assessed in GCSE English literature, History and Geography.
- Exam boards will provide some advance information on what other subjects' exams will focus on – this is expected in early February.
- Students will have formulae sheets in GCSE Maths and revised equation sheets in GCSE Combined Science and GCSE Physics.
- Requirements for practical work have changed slightly in some subjects.
  - *We have provided more information on how this affects our students in each of their subjects below.*

#### **What if there are further lockdowns or disruption?**

The government really wants exams to go ahead next year but if events mean they can't, they plan for TAGs to be used again. Assessments that take place in schools over the course of the year already – such as regular end-of-unit assessments and mock exams – will be used as evidence for a final GCSE grade. Students will be told beforehand by their teacher if any work could contribute towards their final TAG.

#### **What changes will there be to grading?**

The government would like to bring down the number of students achieving high grades, so they have said that results are likely to be higher than in 2019, but not as high as in 2020 or 2021. However, with hard work, our students can still achieve the highest grades.

#### **When will GCSE exams happen in 2022?**

GCSE exams will happen in May and June, as normal. The final dates will be confirmed soon.

#### **What about BTECs?**

The government want BTECs to go ahead as normal, just like GCSEs. However, there are some changes and some units that were assessed during Year 10 may be graded with TAGs. There is more information on how this affects our students below.

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### When will students get their results?

GCSE results day will be held on 25th August 2022.

### Specific changes to assessment in your child's subjects this year

Please note that detailed information about each subject's GCSE course content and assessments can be found on the Curriculum pages of the school's website. Details about upcoming assessments will always be put on Satchel.

Subject	Exam board and code	Changes
English Literature	AQA 8702	Students will sit two examination papers in English Literature. Paper 1's units will be on <i>Shakespeare</i> and <i>Unseen Poetry</i> . This will be assessed as a one hour and forty-five minute assessment. Paper 2 will consist of the <i>19th Century text</i> and the <i>AQA Love and Relationships cluster of poems</i> . This will be assessed as a one hour and forty minute assessment. Students will not be assessed on the Modern Drama component, <i>An Inspector Calls</i> .
English Language	AQA 8700	Exams will go ahead as planned. The exam board no longer requires students to record their speech for the Speaking and Listening component.
Mathematics	Edexcel 1MA1	In Maths, students will still be assessed on a range of curriculum content, sitting three papers each of 90 minutes length. The exam board have confirmed that students will be given a formula sheet and will be given some notice of topics that will be examined in February.
Combined Science	AQA 8464	Students will be given a formulae sheet in GCSE Combined Science covering all the equations required in the subject content. Students will continue to carry out practical tasks in Science as normal although the exam boards have said these can be delivered as demonstrations only.
Biology	AQA 8461	Exams will go ahead as planned. The exam board will be providing advanced information about the focus of these exams by early February.
Chemistry	AQA 8462	Exams will go ahead as planned. The exam board will be providing advanced information about the focus of these exams by early February.
Physics	AQA 8463	Students will be given a formulae sheet in GCSE Physics
Religious Studies	AQA 8062NA	Exams will go ahead as planned. The exam board will be providing advanced information about the focus of these exams by early February.
Art, Craft and Design	Edexcel 8201	Art and Design usually consists of one internally assessed component (completed over the year) and an externally moderated component (completed in exam conditions).





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		However, this year, the externally moderated component has been removed. Therefore, students' grade will be based only on the internally assessed component.
Computer Science	OCR J276	Exams will go ahead as planned. The exam board will be providing advanced information about the focus of these exams by early February.
Design and Technology	AQA 8552	Changes have been made to the NEA section of GCSE Design and Technology. The section entitled <i>Realising ideas</i> has been reduced from 20 to 10 marks, with students no longer marked on their making skills and are no longer required to produce a final prototype. The section entitled 'Analysing and evaluation' has been reduced from 20 to 15 marks, with no expectation to test the final prototype.
Drama	AQA 8261	The written exam will go ahead as planned. There has been a slight amendment to the NEA assessments, with the option to submit a monologue for component 2.
Food Preparation and Nutrition	Eduqas 3560	Changes have been made to the NEA section of GCSE Food Preparation and Nutrition. NEA 1 has been removed, NEA 2 will be released earlier, and the number of dishes each student has to prepare has reduced. As a consequence, students are not expected to demonstrate all of the skills and techniques listed in the subject content.
French	AQA 8658	In French, students will be assessed through formal speaking tests, in the normal way. The format of the test will be the same for each tier and will consist of three parts: a role play, photo-card discussion and general conversation (with a supervised preparation time of 12 minutes). Marks for the speaking skill will be equally weighted, at 25%, alongside the three other language skills of listening, reading and writing. The exam board have confirmed that there will be an extra optional question in the writing assessment (Paper 4) to help students to focus on fewer themes in their writing.
Geography	AQA 1GA0	In Geography, students are no longer required to complete two fieldwork enquires and therefore will not have any questions on these fieldwork enquiries. They will however still have questions based around generic fieldwork. Within paper 2, students will have an option to not answer questions on one of the three sections. This is not yet confirmed by AQA but most likely to be a choice to answer questions on section B (the changing economic world) or section C (the challenges of resource management). As a school, we will be choosing to revise section C, not section B.

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History	OCR J411	In History, students will be assessed only on the following four units, each of which will be assessed as a one-hour examination: <i>The People's Health 1250-2000</i> ; <i>Elizabethan England 1580-1603</i> ; <i>The Making of America 1789-1900</i> ; and <i>Living Under Nazi Rule: 1933-1945</i> . The exam board have confirmed that students will not be examined on one of the five units ( <i>History Around Us</i> ).
Music	Eduqas C660QS	Exams will go ahead as planned. The exam board will be providing advanced information about the focus of these exams by early February.
Sociology	AQA 1PE0	Exams will go ahead as planned. The exam board will be providing advanced information about the focus of these exams by early February.
Spanish	AQA 8658	In Spanish, students will be assessed through formal speaking tests, in the normal way. The format of the test will be the same for each tier and will consist of three parts: a role play, photo-card discussion and general conversation (with a supervised preparation time of 12 minutes). Marks for the speaking skill will be equally weighted, at 25%, alongside the three other language skills of listening, reading and writing. The exam board have confirmed that there will be an extra optional question in the writing assessment (Paper 4) to help students to focus on fewer themes in their writing.
BTEC Digital Information Technology	Edexcel 603/2740/6	There has been a reduction in the content assessed, so Learning Aim A will not be assessed.
BTEC Sport	Edexcel 600/4779/3	Students who missed their online exam during lockdown in January 2021 will be awarded a Teacher Assessed Grade for that unit based on the teacher's judgement using relevant evidence, i.e. work and assessments completed in Y10. All other units will be assessed as planned.

Some subjects have important assessments taking place in the next few months that will play an important role in deciding your child's final grade. Some of these are NEA (non-examination assessment) which is similar to coursework. Please see details of these below and if you have any questions about this, please contact the school to speak to your child's teacher.

Art, Craft and Design	NEA component 1 is ongoing all year and this year forms 100% of the GCSE grade. There will be two significant assessment points over the year. The first assessment will be in December and the second assessment in the summer term.
Design and Technology	Students have started their NEA work, the deadline for which is 11 February 2022.

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Drama	The devising drama performance will take place after school on Tuesday 12 October.	
Food Preparation and Nutrition	Students have started their NEA work, the deadline for which is 11 February 2022. The FPN practical assessment will be on: Monday 31 January (for students in 11Y) and Friday 4 February (for students in 11Z).	
Music	Performance 1 will take place on Monday 1 November. Composition 1 will take place on Monday 6 December.	
BTEC DIT	The Component 3 exam will take place on 10 February 2022.	
BTEC Sport	Unit 3: Learning Aim A – 20/12/2021                      Learning Aim B – 08/02/2022 Learning Aim C – 06/03/2022                      Learning Aim D – 19/03/2022 Unit 6: Learning Aim A – 30/03/2022                      Learning Aim B – 20/04/2022 Learning Aim C – 16/05/2022	

**What we are doing to support your child**

Our first priority is on ensuring that the learning that takes place in classrooms is of the highest standard, so your child makes good progress. We know that students’ education was interrupted a lot during Year 10, so our teachers have worked hard to ensure that not only will all material be covered before the end of Year 11, but students will also be revisiting content studied in Year 10.

We are tracking all students’ attainment and progress and using this to support them in lessons. As you will be aware from Mr Shimirty’s recent letter, we have set up a programme of intervention tutoring for select students. All students will meet with a senior member of staff early in November with a focus on reviewing students’ grades and supporting them in their preparation for GCSEs and transition to post-16 study.

Students are also welcome to use the library at break, lunch or after school until 4pm daily to complete homework or to revise. Homework will continue to be set regularly on Satchel, and we encourage you to log in and check your child’s homework here.

We really appreciate your support for all these efforts.

**What you can do to support your child**

Your child can only succeed with your support. As such, we ask you to do the following:

- Help them get organized – help them plan their revision
- Encourage your child to do a few hours work per evening all year: with school finishing at 3.30, all students should make time for an average of three hours’ revision per evening
- Make sure they eat and sleep well
- Give them access to a quiet space to work (and time off their phone)
- Encourage regular short breaks
- Provide reassurance and support – all this will soon pay off
- Ensure punctuality and high attendance in school
- Keep in contact with us, especially if you or they have any problems
- Please ensure you attend the Sixth Form Open Event in November and the parents’ evening in January.

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### **Effective revision**

Revision is only time well spent if it helps ensure information goes into the long-term memory, and exam skills are developed well. As such, we recommend that students:

- Make sure they write things down in order to remember them
- Do past paper exam questions
- Test themselves
- Be quizzed on key facts by their parent/carer
- Space out revision of different topics and keep returning to those topics
- Learn keywords and definitions by heart (flashcards, post-its)
- Have a revision timetable; an example is below.

### **Monday**

3.30	Travel home, rest
4.00	History Unit 1
4.30	English Lit
5.00	Biology Unit 3
5.30	Watch TV
6.00	Religious Studies
6.30	Homework
7.00	Homework
7.30	Have dinner
8.00	English Lit
8.30	Watch TV
9.00	Watch TV
9.30	Bedtime

Students should **not**:

- Read text over and over
- Highlight text
- Watch YouTube clips
- Cram the night before a test

### **Key dates**

Sixth Form Open Event & KS4 Information Evening:	25 November 2021
Autumn Mock exams:	week commencing 6 December 2021
Autumn reports:	early January 2022
Parents' evening:	26 January 2022
Sixth Form application deadline:	31 January 2022
Spring Mock Exams:	week commencing 21 March 2022
Summer GCSEs:	May-June 2022
GCSE results day:	25 August 2022

Yours sincerely,

Tom Greenwood  
**Vice Principal**

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