



# THE BUCKINGHAM SCHOOL

## A SPECIALIST SPORTS COLLEGE

London Road  
Buckingham  
MK18 1AT

Tel: 01280 812206

Fax: 01280 822525

Email: [office@buckinghamsschool.org](mailto:office@buckinghamsschool.org)

Website: [www.buckinghamsschool.org](http://www.buckinghamsschool.org)

Headteacher: Mr A McGinnes

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22 January 2021

Dear Colleagues, Students, Parents, Carers and Governors,

I am writing to you about the Ofqual consultation on the proposed alternatives to GCSE and A Levels this summer.

The consultation questionnaire is long, with 68 questions. You do not need to complete every question, but I hope you will be able to reply to the earlier questions.

What can be deduced from the questions at the link below is the only information that we have. As has become the norm, the school has no further information or guidance on this matter, nor any other way of responding, as an organisation. Therefore, I am particularly encouraging my colleagues, as education professionals, to ensure that they respond.

Obviously, we will share the final confirmation of what is being examined and when, on a subject by subject basis. We very successfully ran an internal process last year and I reassure you that we are prepared as a school, for multiple scenarios this summer.

The consultation can be accessed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-on-how-gcse-as-and-a-level-grades-should-be-awarded-in-summer-2021>

Via the link, you can read the document and scroll down to access a questionnaire.

### **Summary**

- A Level and GCSE examinations would be replaced by a teacher assessed grade
- The grades would be awarded in May/June
- The exam boards would moderate nationally in June
- Results will be published in July

Our recent messages about the importance of continuing to work hard, have been further justified. Students will be awarded a grade that they are currently working at (not a prediction), as follows:

- Based upon all the work that they have completed so far
- The consultation is in part to determine whether there should additionally be extra assessments, provided by the exam boards that schools could or maybe have to use

The consultation makes it clear that, whatever happens, students will need to keep working and learning until late May/early June. I strongly believe that the knowledge and skills that they will continue to acquire should not be forgotten.

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*The Buckingham School is concerned that every student should have the opportunity to attend school activities/obtain equipment, regardless of their financial circumstances. As such, it may be possible to subsidise those students who would otherwise be unable to attend trips/purchase items. Please feel free to write in confidence to Mrs K Bones at [kbones@buckinghamsschool.org](mailto:kbones@buckinghamsschool.org), if you wish to seek assistance, or obtain more information about Pupil Premium funding.*



The consultation closes at 11.45pm on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> January 2021. Please see below for some guidance on the questions.

We will continue to actively seek out more information about the process of examinations and keep you informed of everything that we know. I thank you all, as heartily as ever, for the incredible support the community shows for its school.

With my best wishes,



**Mr A McGinnes**

Headteacher

[aallen@buckinghamschool.org](mailto:aallen@buckinghamschool.org)

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## Guidance on the Questionnaire

I have included a little professional viewpoint here. The design of the process and the way it is completed, needs to be fair for all students, in all schools and colleges.

### Questions 1-7:

- Whether students should keep working (yes, they should, it is the knowledge and skills that are acquired that are really needed to prepare for the future, the final grade is the icing on the cake)
- Whether teachers should be the key in the process of awarding grades (yes, they know the students best, and schools will follow rigorous processes. The period in year 10/12 at the start of the course was the only “normal” part, and should be considered in final grades)

### Questions 8-14:

- Cover the way that the process will be designed to be fair to all students
- Questions 10, 11 and 12 are the key things that will lead to this
- Question 13 causes concern – examinations are usually marked by paid examiners. The proposal is that teachers mark this summer’s examinations, on top of their usual workload (and without extra remuneration). This does not seem fair, because the examination fees that the school pays are in part to cover the cost of the marking by examiners

### Questions 15-19:

- These cover the use of controlled assessment materials to support with final grades
- I feel that students who have already completed work on controlled assessment deserve to have that incorporated

### Questions 20-24:

- Should teachers be able to use other information to support their final grade? I feel that, after all of the disruption to courses, it would be unfair to grade students based upon one assessment. As above the only part of the course delivered in “normal” times was the first six months in year 10/12
- If students take a single examination, they will have uneven experiences in preparing for it – a wider range of evidence should be included
- Of course, training should be provided by the exam boards!

### Questions 25 – 30:

- Exams can only be fairly taken in school – students have a wide range of conditions at home, in terms of access to space, peace and technology
- However, this can only happen if the risks from Covid-19 have reduced by this stage in the year.

### Question 31:

- Examination boards should provide support and guidance to teachers during this process.

### Questions 32 – 40:

- It is set out that exam boards and schools should work together to ensure fair processes are followed. No algorithms!

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Questions 41 – 52:

- The right to appeal is important
- After all of the disruption, it seems fair students have their results earlier than normal and have extra time to sort out their next steps

Questions 53 – 60:

- A fair process for Private Candidates (e.g. students who are home-educated) and for students from outside of the UK is important

Questions 61- 64:

- Equality for all is important and suggestions for methods of reducing any increase in inequality caused by these proposals is asked for

Questions 65 – 68:

- These consider the cost impact of these proposals and welcome any suggestions for methods of reducing the cost burden of these proposals.

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