

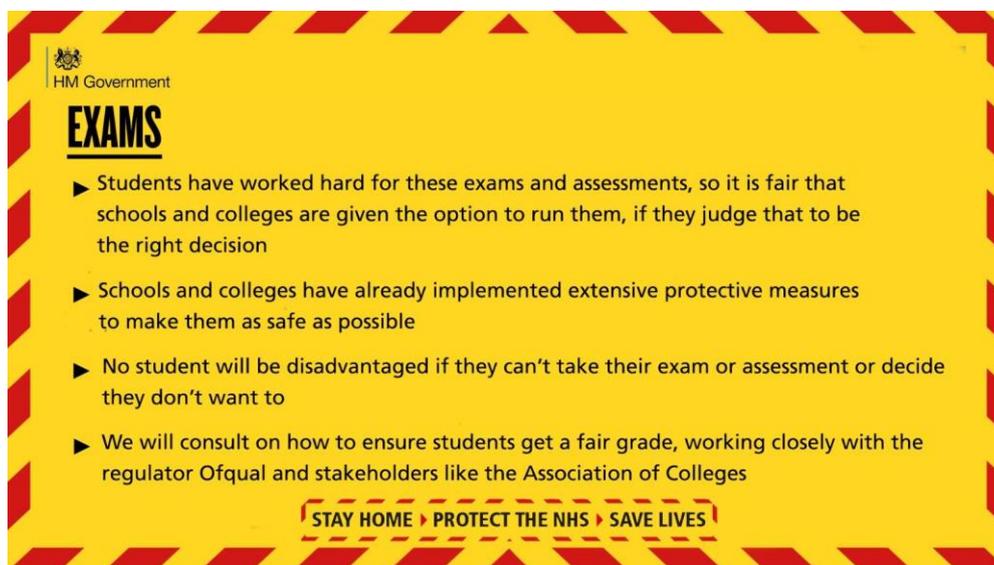
7 January 2021

Dear Year 11 / 12 / 13 student

Exams for Applied General Qualifications

I am writing with regards to the exam(s) you are entered to sit in the coming days. The Department for Education has said 'schools and colleges are given the option to run them, if they judge that to be the right decision'. You will be aware that some schools and colleges took the decision not to offer the exams to their students as soon as they were made optional. We have taken a little longer to await further information about how grades will be calculated next summer before contacting you with your options. We feel that it is right and important to give you options and to present you with the information in order for you to make an informed choice.

After the fallout of the exam grading situation last summer, many students were eventually delighted to be awarded what were called 'Centre Assessed Grades' (CAGs) that were provided by their school or college. Despite this approach, which was considered 'more generous' than the originally planned algorithm, some students were still disappointed. This was largely because they believed they could have done better than the CAG they were awarded and/or because they felt sad that they did not have the chance to take the exam to show what they could do and take full control of the outcome they received. As the Education Secretary said in his statement today 'exams remain the fairest way of assessing what a student knows'. The following graphic was released by the DfE on Wednesday evening:



HM Government

EXAMS

- ▶ Students have worked hard for these exams and assessments, so it is fair that schools and colleges are given the option to run them, if they judge that to be the right decision
- ▶ Schools and colleges have already implemented extensive protective measures to make them as safe as possible
- ▶ No student will be disadvantaged if they can't take their exam or assessment or decide they don't want to
- ▶ We will consult on how to ensure students get a fair grade, working closely with the regulator Ofqual and stakeholders like the Association of Colleges

STAY HOME ▶ PROTECT THE NHS ▶ SAVE LIVES

We believe the right approach to the scheduled exams is to offer you a choice. We ask that you consider the following information (which is accurate at the time of writing) before making your decision and we encourage you to discuss your decision with your parents and teachers. We are confident that we can deliver exams that are as Covid-safe as possible and have put in place plans that outline to candidates how we will conduct the exams with full 2m social-distancing and mask-wearing (unless you are exempt) to protect both yourself and the staff administering the exam.

Cont/d ...

Option 1

You can opt to be withdrawn from the exam. It appears, according to a statement released today, that you will then be awarded a teacher-assessed grade for the exam unit. How that grade will be calculated at the point of writing is not yet clear and we are unlikely to have full guidance before the exams are due to take place.

If you are in Year 12 and/or on year 1 of your course, you may well have the chance to take the exam next year if you feel that you can improve your result. You should be aware that exact arrangements like this are yet to be made so there is a degree of speculation in this statement. You should also consider that it is likely you will be balancing the preparation for this exam alongside continuing your studies and preparing for your Year 13 exams. It is unlikely you would be able to receive the same teaching and support during Year 13 for this exam specifically to the degree you have received in the lead up to these exams.

Option 2

You can remain entered for the exam. You should be aware that in taking the exam, you are balancing the opportunity to demonstrate what you know and sit an exam you have worked hard for, with the fact that you will receive a grade that will be based on the exam and **may** impact upon your overall result for the qualification. If you do not do as well as you hope, it **could** disadvantage you, although there may still be an opportunity for a teacher-assessed grade to be submitted for this unit. We do not yet know whether you would be able to reject the grade for it to be replaced with a CAG if you are disappointed with the result. If you are keen to take as much control as is available to you to influence the grade you are awarded in the summer and sit the exam, this is your best chance.

I have included, at the end of this letter a summary of the statement made by OCR in the past 24 hours.

Having decided which option you wish to follow, we ask that you now:

Email the Exams Officer (exams@southdartmoor.devon.sch.co.uk) to let us know either that you **wish to be withdrawn from the exam** (we will withdraw your entry but leave you entered for the qualification) or **confirm that you would like to sit the exam** (in which case we will finalise our Covid-safe exam plans to include you). Please do this **by 12 noon on Friday 8 January** so that we have time to adjust arrangements and finalise plans.

If you have any questions, please get in touch with me, the 6th form team (Year 12 & 13) or indeed your teachers, Mrs Avery – Wright and Mr Carlson-Hedges. Please be assured that we will continue to act in your best interests and provide the best support we can.

Kind regards

Mrs E Gallagher

Deputy Head Teacher

From OCR – 6 January: If your students do not take our exams this January, there are options:

1. There may be an opportunity to take their assessment at a future date. **If this is not possible due to arrangements still to be announced for this summer, we'll work with the DfE and Ofqual to make sure they are treated fairly.**
2. If students were going to certificate in January, we'll award a grade to a student if there is enough evidence, to help them progress.

Trust Respect Equality Excellence