



ST. THOMAS MORE LANGUAGE COLLEGE

Serving God, Striving for Excellence

Headteacher: Dr T. Papworth Ph.D, MBA, NPQH, MA



'Outstanding' Ofsted 2013/2014 'Outstanding' Diocesan Inspection 2014 and 2018

Dear all Year 11 parents / carers / students

Hope this communication finds you well, healthy in body and mind, and safe. I am reminded of the recent quote from Terry Waite (who was held captive for 1,763 days from 20 January 1987) about being in isolation – 'we are not stuck in doors, we are safe in doors'. Different ways of looking at things.

Awarding GCSE Grades Update

As I am sure you will be aware Ofqual have made a statement concerning how GCSE grades will be awarded this year. I have cut and paste a part of the letter from their website below for you to read and share with your sons and daughters:

"How will grades be calculated? Your school or college will be asked to send exam boards two pieces of information for each of your subjects, based on what they know about your work and achievements:

- the grade they believe you were most likely to get if teaching, learning and exams had happened as planned
- within each subject, the order of students at your school or college, by performance, for each grade.

This information will be used to standardise judgements – allowing fine tuning of the standard applied across schools and colleges. Your school or college will consider a range of things like your classwork and homework; your results in assignments and any mock exams; any non-exam assessment or coursework you might have done; and your general progress during your course. This information will allow us, with exam boards, to standardise grades across schools and colleges, to make sure that, as far as possible, results are fair and that students are not advantaged or disadvantaged because their schools or colleges are more generous or harsh than others when making those judgements. That means the final grade you get could be different from the one your school or college sends to the exam board.

Can I see the grades my school/college submits for me? No, this information will be confidential. Please don't ask your teachers, or anyone else at your school or college, to tell you the grades they will be sending to the exam boards or where they have placed you in the order of students; they will not be allowed to share this with you."

I want to reassure you that since Ofqual published this statement, it has been a daily agenda item at our SLT meetings. SLT members have also received advice from our professional teaching organisations, which we are members of individually and as a school. I have also had meetings with other Heads from the LA and the LA Standards' Team to ensure we get this process right. We really are committed to ensuring students get the grades they deserve.



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This will therefore be a focus for all teachers after Easter. The final process that we agree on and adopt will be a lengthy and thorough one, which will have been discussed with the LA, other schools and the Governing Body – who will have to agree to the process of awarding the GCSE grades.

I also want to take this opportunity to highlight three further things with all this in mind:

1. What does 'ensure students get the grades they deserve' actually mean? This means that students that have worked hard at STMLC over the last 5 years will be rewarded as individuals for their efforts. Predicted grades will take into account this effort and will reflect this for them as individuals.

This also means that we are not going to give everyone top grades. We would not do this as there would be a danger that students could then end up starting inappropriate courses in September and failing these courses. We really do want to ensure students get the grades they deserve to enable them to be ready for the next stage of their education as individuals. There are no school league tables next year so the motive for awarding grades is purely a reflection of the individual students' hard work, achievements, assessments and results so far.

2. Students at this stage should continue to work steadily up until we know exactly what the process and checks are going to be put in place in deciding final GCSE grades. Remote learning work will have a role in the predicted grade process. For example, it could be used to support current or higher predictions. Therefore, students that have not fully engaged with it so far, need to think about this very carefully and decide how best to catch up and to engage in the learning after Easter. I also made the concern we had of 'minding the gap' very clear in previous communications. Our biggest concern is students getting on the wrong courses for their ability and having a large curriculum gap.
3. The school is not allowed to tell anyone their individual predictions. Please do not therefore ask the school or any teachers for this information. Please note - Teachers will not have been given any instructions at present as to the rigour or details of the process, as it has not been finalised, so please do not ask them concerning this.



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Once the grading system has been implemented, we will be looking at supporting students to prepare for extending their studies for new courses in September. More information will follow concerning this at a later date.

Please can I ask you not to contact the school asking for further clarifications concerning this as the school is closed for Easter and we will update you with any information we feel you need to know in the near future.

On a personal note, I do empathise completely with you all as parents / carers and the students as I have a Year 11 daughter and a Year 13 daughter. I am fully aware of the extra anxiety this is causing everyone, especially as the finer details of all the scenarios is not clear in Ofqual's letter. As we receive more information, we will ensure we pass it on.

Wishing you all the best and a safe, happy and holy Easter weekend.

Could I encourage as many of our year 11s to enter our poetry competition – this weekend would be a good time to write their poems and submit them.

God Bless

Dr T Papworth

9 April 2020



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