



# SPALDING GRAMMAR SCHOOL

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Headmaster: S M Wilkinson BSc

Dear Students and Parents

I am writing further to the Secretary of State for Education's announcement on Friday, regarding the post-cancellation model for examination grades, which I have now had the opportunity to consider. Sadly, while the statement ([https://www.gov.uk/government/news/further-details-on-exams-and-grades-announced?utm\\_source=96f31727-1fb9-408b-a7fa-d91d4ceaeb6b&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm\\_content=immediate](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/further-details-on-exams-and-grades-announced?utm_source=96f31727-1fb9-408b-a7fa-d91d4ceaeb6b&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=immediate)) provides some clarification, there remain just as many unanswered questions.

What we do know is that students will be provided with a "calculated" grade, which will be "indistinguishable from those provided in other years" and will follow a "distribution...similar...to that in other years." The 'calculation' will take into account not only teacher assessment but also "other relevant data, including prior attainment."

The following observations present themselves:

1. The School will be asked to provide a grade for students, but that grade will only be a part of the story. I have no information as to how that grade will be used, or what their method of 'calculation' will be. Indications are that we should expect that information in April.
2. The School's grade will include, but not be based solely upon, the trial examinations taken just after Christmas. I recognise that there is, generally speaking, an improvement in students' performance between the trials and the finals; where a better performance has been shown in a student's work more broadly, we will be able, it suggests, to factor that in. Please note that, at this time, I have no guidance (but am promised it in due course) as to exactly what is required and how this is going to be applied "fairly and robustly" across schools. It may be that there is some external moderation process, including the possible submission of work, such as with other non-examined assessment (NEA) completed internally.
3. The inclusion of "prior attainment" would suggest that a student's GCSE profile (for Year 13) or their KS2 profile (for Year 11) will be incorporated – which might mean, essentially, that FFT grades (derived not by the School, but by an independent agency contracted by the Government – the Fischer Family Trust) are used as part of the calculation. The "other relevant data" may translate into some factor relating to the School's historic performance in examinations generally.
4. The fact that the Government intends that the overall grade distribution will be similar to previous years does mean that there will be a spread of grades awarded nationally – that gives me some reassurance that it isn't going to be possible for schools to over-inflate all their students' grades to manufacture an unusually positive picture. We shall do our best here to ensure that students get the grades they deserve; however, again, at this stage, I do not have any idea what evidence will need to be provided in support of any grades we give.
5. There is going to be an appeals process against the overall grade awarded. Please note that does not mean that there will be an appeals process available against any grade the School is asked to provide. It is the final 'calculated' grade, which should be issued "before the end of July", that can be appealed. The wording needs careful attention – the grade can be appealed where a student considers that the process has not been applied correctly in their case; they cannot appeal just because they don't agree with the grade. The process for appealing is not

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yet known and I suspect will not be forthcoming for some time. The detail will most likely be made available to students along with the publication of their grade.

6. There is also going to be the opportunity, should students wish, to take examinations, possibly in September, in order to secure an actual grade. Again, at this stage, we have no further information on that.
7. Whether for the purposes of preparing to possibly take those examinations, or for the purposes of having more recent work of quality that could be factored into the School's provided grade, it is important that students should continue to engage in study during the closure period. That is particularly the case where students have NEA/coursework to complete, as it is entirely feasible that this might be included in the evidence required by Examination Boards. No student should be of the opinion that they have been granted an extended holiday for six months.
8. Clearly, there are implications for the next stages, in particular getting on to Sixth Form courses or into university. These things have not been covered by the Secretary; however, we do know that some universities have sought to 'cash-in' on the crisis by changing their admissions criteria or offers in order to get students to sign up. In line with the Universities Minister's statement of 23 March ([https://www.gov.uk/government/news/universities-told-not-to-alter-applicants-offers?utm\\_source=bf12f571-852e-4a5f-94cd-905146b55497&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm\\_content=immediate](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/universities-told-not-to-alter-applicants-offers?utm_source=bf12f571-852e-4a5f-94cd-905146b55497&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=immediate)), I urge students not to make any knee-jerk reactions which may not ultimately be in their best interests. I understand that it may seem to be an offer of certainty in an otherwise very uncertain world, but please think carefully before acting.

I hope that this has provided some information for you, while realising that it won't answer all your questions. The Government has also provided a FAQ page, which you may find of interest (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-cancellation-of-gcses-as-and-a-levels-in-2020/coronavirus-covid-19-cancellation-of-gcses-as-and-a-levels-in-2020>), and I shall continue to keep you updated, via the new 'School Communication' section of the website (<http://www.spaldinggrammar.lincs.sch.uk/page/?title=School+Communication&pid=175>), as we receive further guidance from them or the Examination Boards. In the meantime, I ask that you do not contact the School or individual teachers seeking to know what grade we will be providing when the time comes – at this point we cannot give an honest or accurate answer. It follows, therefore, that we also cannot respond to queries as to what a student might be able to do to improve their "predicted" grade. As I said in point 7, the best course of action for students is to continue to work, to the best of their ability, on what their teachers have asked them to do.

Thank you for your continued support in these extraordinary times.

Your sincerely



S M Wilkinson  
Headmaster