



**HITCHIN BOYS' SCHOOL**  
An Academy Trust

12th April 2021

Dear year 11 and 13 students and their parents/carers,

Further information has been published by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) and individual exam boards over the Easter holidays. This letter is to signpost the updated advice and to also provide some further details about our approach at Hitchin Boys' School.

Attached to this letter are the following documents:

- 1) The JCQ guidance for students and parents. You should read this in full as it will answer many of the questions that you may have
- 2) A booklet that describes the assessment portfolio for each subject at GCSE/A-level, showing the assessment evidence that has already been gathered and what will be assessed between now and June. For those doing BTEC courses, there will be no external exams and students will continue to work on their coursework portfolios.
- 3) A timetable that shows which lessons (days/sessions) will be used for in-class assessments

As a reminder, the key dates are as follows:

- 19 April - publication of additional subject support materials (question banks made up of mostly past paper questions that you can use for revision)
- Through April, consortium A level subjects may have in-class assessments.
- 10th May - 3-week window for further in-class assessments
- 28th May - celebration event: year 11 and 13 pastoral teams will confirm details of this with their year groups closer to the time.
- June - no lessons in school for year 11 and 13, bridging work and super curricular resources will be provided. Grades will be submitted to the exam boards for review on the 18th June after internal checking and moderation
- Week commencing 28th June - year 12 induction across Hitchin Consortium
- 2nd July - Founders day, year 11 and 13 expected to attend
- 10 August – A-level results day
- 12 August – GCSE results day
- 16 August – deadline for receiving priority student appeals
- 23 August – deadline for schools and colleges referring priority appeals to exam board with supporting evidence
- 3 September – deadline for receiving non-priority appeals

The arrangements for awarding grades in summer 2021 include internal and external quality assurance measures which aim to ensure that, on results day, you are issued with fair and consistent

Head Teacher: Mr F Moane

grades that have been objectively reached. And of course, objectivity requires evidence that supports a grade and can be independently verified if needed. It is important to note that Ofqual requires portfolios to be broadly consistent across the year group, so there will not be the possibility to create fully bespoke portfolios for every student. However, we will of course make appropriate adjustment to the portfolio if you were absent for an assessment or if one data point is very much out of line with the others (i.e. one very poor grade will not be detrimental if the rest of the portfolio is stronger, likewise, one very high grade will not necessarily lift you to that level!)

Much like with exams in normal years, the grades issued by teachers will not take account of your potential. They will be a snapshot of the standard you are performing at based on a wide range of evidence. It should be no easier or harder for you to achieve a grade this year based on your performance than in previous years. As a school, we are also required to ensure that the overall outcomes are similar to those for public exams at the school between 2017-2019 to ensure that your grades have credibility and we guard against excessive grade inflation.

It is important to note that grading is not a negotiation: it has to be based upon evidence. Your teacher will not be able to disclose the grade that is being submitted in June, as several stages of checking need to take place subsequently. However, you will receive feedback and a further indication of your 'working at' grade later in April. Any undue pressure being applied to teachers by parents or students may be reported to the exam board as 'malpractice.' Whilst we all want you to access your chosen destination in sixth form, university or college, the fact that you want three 'A' grades for a particular course is not something that can influence our decisions, as the evidence needs to be there to support these grades.

We know that the uncertainty around arrangements for this year have caused some anxiety. It is however important to separate out 'normal' levels of stress that would be common in leading up to any major life event (such as public exams), versus abnormal stress that is having an impact upon physical health. If you are feeling debilitated by stress, help should be sought from your tutor or Head of Year.

Although this last year has been disrupted, this process gives you every chance in doing well: you will only be assessed on what you have been taught, you will know topics in advance, exam boards will have published extensive practice materials and there are no high stakes 'exams' at HBS, with assessments being supervised by your teachers in normal lessons and they will be of limited duration.

If the outcomes in August are not what you had expected, there are mechanisms for appeal that are outlined in the attachment. We will provide more details of the process at HBS closer to the time. It is important to note that, other than clerical checks, results could go down as well as up based upon the assessment of the evidence that we will supply to the exam boards. There will be a chance to sit actual GCSE and A-level papers in the Autumn term if you think you could achieve more highly in a set of formal exam assessments.

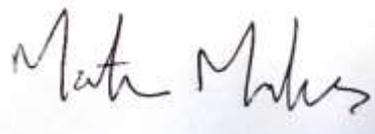
We hope that this gives you further clarity on what the next few months will look like. Below, we have included the best evidence-informed strategies that you can use to prepare for assessments in May. The old adage 'practice makes perfect' really is born out in the evidence.

We ask you to trust us: as teachers, we will do everything within our power to help you to succeed and get to the next stage of your education.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fergal Moane', with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Fergal Moane  
Headteacher

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Martin Monks', with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

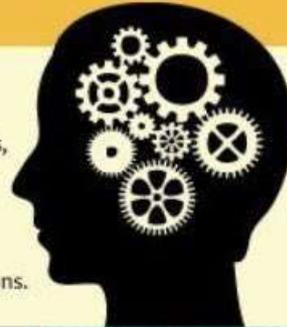
Martin Monks  
Deputy Headteacher

# 10 LEARNING TECHNIQUES

## ➤ WHICH ARE MOST EFFICIENT?

Whether out of habit or by conscious choice, we all make use of various learning techniques when we attempt to store new information in our long-term memory. But not all study habits are created equal; some may be more efficient than others, especially when you factor in the amount of time it takes to implement each one.

Researchers have recently characterized ten learning techniques according to whether they provide high, moderate, or low utility, based on each technique's relative efficacy, ease of use, and applicability to a broad range of learning situations.



### HIGH UTILITY



#### PRACTICE TESTING

Using practice tests to review information



#### DISTRIBUTED PRACTICE

Spreading out study sessions over time

### MODERATE UTILITY



#### ELABORATIVE INTERROGATION

Asking yourself "why" as you read



#### SELF-EXPLANATION

Generating reasons to explain new information



#### INTERLEAVED PRACTICE

Trying out different types of problems when you practice

### LOW UTILITY



#### SUMMARIZATION

Summarizing lengthy information



#### KEYWORD MNEMONICS

Associating new words with similar sounding words



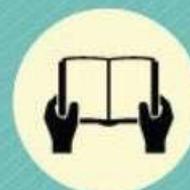
#### VISUALIZING

Generating mental images while you read



#### HIGHLIGHTING & UNDERLINING

Emphasizing key points in the text



#### REREADING

Reviewing information multiple times