



Queen Mary's Grammar School

Headmaster: R J Langton, M A

Wednesday, 15 April 2020

Important Update: Year 9 IGCSE ICT

Dear Year 9 Parents,

I hope this letter finds you and your family well. As the school closed you may remember me writing to you to tell you that we were withdrawing all candidates from the IGCSE ICT Exams in the summer term. At the time we felt we had no other choice, the school would be closed when the exams were due to take place and no other options were offered by the exam board (Cambridge International). Since this time the board have taken the exceptional step of cancelling all summer IGCSE examinations across the whole world. As a result of this, they are now offering the opportunity to grade students this summer without taking the final examinations (similar to what is happening for Year 11 and Year 13.) Following careful consideration, we feel the right decision is to get **students graded this summer**.

How will students be graded?

Cambridge International state: "The decision on grades to be awarded to candidates will be made by Cambridge, using our own evidence combined with evidence from schools." Details of evidence and processes are still being clarified by the examination board. However, they list on their website the following types of evidence that schools could provide:

- mock exams
- coursework (complete or incomplete)
- assignments

What they do explicitly state is that mock examinations are "just one of several pieces of evidence to consider. We know students work very hard between mock exams and the actual exam, and performances can improve." Consequently, students should not conclude the mock examination grade will be their final grade.

We are aware many students have taken their work folders home with them. It is important students now **do not destroy any of their work**.

Cambridge International's statement to schools

The examination boards full most recent statement can be found at the following location:

<https://www.cambridgeinternational.org/news/>.

If you read the above you will see that they are still offering the opportunity for us to withdraw candidates. To clarify, following the exam boards new communication, **we no longer intend to withdraw any candidates from the IGCSE Examinations. We intend to enter all candidates for grading this summer.** Clearly, there are still many details about this process that need to be worked out both by the examination board and the school. But I can assure you that, as the Headmaster has said to all examination classes, "it will be a fair and robust policy, once the methodology has been established by Ofqual and the exam boards. We can't say anymore at this point, but we will communicate when we have more information."

As the board are yet to release detailed information about grading, a risk we can foresee is that the exam board decide, in a later communication, that early entries are not permitted (i.e. you must be in Year 11 to be graded). If this occurs, we will ensure students still get the opportunity to receive the qualification by entering them at a later date. At the time of writing we have contacted the examination board to clarify their position on this, they inform us they have no intention to limit entries to Year 11 and above. As an international exam board they are not regulated by Ofqual and so do not have to follow all their rulings (Ofqual have stated they are consulting on not grading students below Year 11 this summer.)

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Resit opportunities

The emerging national and global news on Covid-19 has changed a lot since I last wrote to you. The time schools will be closed for appears unclear. For this reason, we do not intend to enter any students in the November 2020 sitting. However, next year we will offer students a resit opportunity in the June 2021 examination session.

We will keep you updated as and when we receive any more information from Cambridge International. In the meantime, if you have any questions please email me: fe-round@qmgs.walsall.sch.uk. One question, I anticipate might come up is: "If I decided not to enter my son for the examinations (before the boards January 2020 deadline) could he now be entered?" This would not be allowed by the exam board.

After Easter students will continue to be set assignments on Microsoft Teams. However, the focus will change to Computer Science. We will be looking at Computational Thinking and Programming. Your son has already demonstrated he is self-motivated and hard-working by deciding to enter the IGCSE examination this year. I hope, where possible, in the coming weeks they use their time wisely. Being a competent computer user and programmer has never been so important.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'F. Round', with a stylized, flowing script.

Mrs F. Round
Head of IT and Computer Science