



6 January 2021

Dear students, parents and carers,

Re: BTEC and Cambridge National/Technical Exams – January Series

On the 4th January in the announcement about the establishment of lockdown by the government there was a confirmation that January exams would go ahead as planned. Yesterday evening this decision was changed and in the absence of a national decision by the government to cancel scheduled exams this month, parents and students have been informed that schools and colleges will make decisions about whether exams go ahead as planned. This places schools in an impossible position balancing the differing views and interests of students and parents, especially with an exam scheduled today. We made the decision to go ahead with today's examination for the students who had been consistently told that they would sit it and I want to take this opportunity to commend the students in Year 13 who sat their BTEC Sport paper, in spite of the snow, arrived promptly and conducted themselves superbly in today's examination.

In consultation with the Tandridge Learning Trust and the Senior Leadership Team I have considered whether it is appropriate to make a unilateral decision not to run any exams at Warlingham School and have concluded that **for those who wish to sit them, the exams will run as planned to facilitate candidates sitting these examinations while respecting that students, parents and carers have the right to make an individual and informed decision as to whether their child will attend school in order to do this at this time.**

I recognise that students have been working hard towards these exams and feel they have the right to complete the examinations and believe they should be given the opportunity to sit them based on the information currently available to me, and especially in light of the late timing of this announcement. Arrangements have already been made to mitigate risks in line with the DfE contingency framework to ensure that these examinations can take place and we have completed a risk assessment taking into account the current situation and the increased space available in school for examinations to take place in.

Pearson (BTEC) have published information confirming the following:

"Where a college or school decides to offer exams, you will be able to sit your external assessments as planned and if your school or college decides not to offer vocational exams, we have agreed the following with Ofqual and the DfE to ensure that no learner is disadvantaged."

"We will award a grade for any learner who is unable to take their exams and has enough evidence to receive a certificate that they need for progression."

"Learners unable to take their assessment this January may be able to take their assessment at a later date. If that is not possible, we will put in place arrangements to ensure you are not disadvantaged."

I have not yet received information from the OCR and RSA awarding bodies who run the Cambridge Technical and Cambridge National qualifications although it is anticipated that their communications will be similar in their assurances from Ofqual.

In light of all of the above, a student's participation (or non-participation) in these exams is expected to only form part of the overall process for awarding a grade, in an as yet undetermined process for this summer. This is of course always the case since exams take place throughout the two-year course, typically with resit opportunities

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and in the majority of courses; coursework also contributes to the award of a final overall grade in normal circumstances.

I hope in reaching and communicating this decision, I have provided the opportunity for students and parents/carers to exercise personal choice considering whether it is in their interests (or the interests of their child) and that of family members for them to attend school and complete exams. This allows students to balance the anxiety of completing exams at the present time, the anxiety of not completing them and your own personal circumstances. Understandably, students who are unwell, self-isolating or who have tested positive for coronavirus should not attend school at this time.

In these circumstances, please contact the Exams Officer by email (exams@warlingshamschool.co.uk) so that we can record students' absence from the examination accordingly.

Please let us know your intentions in order that we know which students to expect for the examinations next week and on 18th January by emailing your teacher for the course by 12pm on Friday 8th January.

Please accept my apologies for the late notice of this communication arising from the late announcements yesterday.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P Foster', with a horizontal line underneath.

Mr P Foster

Headteacher