



7 January 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

Vocational Exams (Years 11 – 13): January 2021

You may be aware that the Government has now announced that vocational exams this January can go ahead at the discretion of the school. We understand that students are concerned about how this decision will impact their results in the summer and also about their safety given the current lockdown due to COVID-19.

As a school, we believe that the exams should go ahead for the following reasons:

- Our students are very well prepared to undertake this exam series; students who have been working incredibly hard to prepare for these assessments should be given the opportunity to demonstrate what they are capable of. It is likely that they are more prepared than other students nationally and we know that the exams are going ahead in a number of other local schools.
- In the absence of any further detail from Ofqual and the Exam Boards we believe that not taking these exams could disadvantage students (please see below regarding exam withdrawals).
- Concerns around the safety of taking these exams are mainly related to FE college settings (for example Bristol or Weston College) who have hundreds of students aged 16 - 19+ all due to take these exams at the same time, which clearly is a concern. At Backwell, a very small number of students would be coming onto a virtually empty site to take the exam. We have already made plans to ensure that all students are very well distanced during the exam itself. We therefore believe that it is safe for students to undertake these exams on our school site.

If any student and their parents/carers decide that they are not able to sit these exams, then there is the option to withdraw from the January series without any cost. **However, if you do decide to withdraw then there is no special consideration or option for an assessed grade for this unit and we do not yet have any information about how overall grades will be calculated.** The latest guidance from the exam boards is that you will have to complete any missed units in the summer. Although GCSEs and A-levels have been cancelled there has been no such announcement for vocational qualifications.

We will of course continue to support students with any further work that they need to complete to achieve their qualification(s).

If you would like to withdraw from the January vocational exam series, please contact the Exams Team **before the day of your exam** by emailing exams@backwellschool.net

Yours sincerely

Mr J Nunes
Headteacher

Message sent to parents of students who are studying:
Performing Arts (Year 12 and Year 13)
Applied Science (Year 12 and 13)
Health & Social Care (Year 13)
Business Studies (Year 13)