



Duke's students celebrate great GCSE results



We are incredibly proud of our Year 11 students, who are officially the most successful GCSE year group in the history of the school or its predecessors! Duke's students achieved the highest ever pass rates in both English and Maths, as well as in almost every other subject. For a year group that were deprived of a proper end to their compulsory education, the fantastic results were hard earned and I hope that our students and their families celebrate their success.

Along with our trustees, I had the pleasure of interviewing many of our Year 11 students. Unfortunately lock-down meant that we didn't complete all of the interviews. However, having spoken to the majority of students we got a very clear picture of what this year group were like; they are a group of polite, thoughtful, aspirational and hard working young people. Mr Atkinson, all of Duke's staff and I are very proud of them and what they have achieved. The results they've gained are no less than they deserve and no amount of confusion from the Government should detract from their success.

The run-up to results day has been the most perplexing time for staff and students alike, with so many u turns by the Department for Education it was almost impossible to keep track. Even last night, after all of the results envelopes were prepared and staff had gone home, we received notice that the BTEC grades were under review and may be upgraded. The most disappointing aspect is that if the Government had

listened to school leaders in the first place then all of the mess around exam results could have been avoided. Many of us told them during their consultation in April that using a national formula would not ensure fair results for individual pupils and schools.

As with the A level results last week, our students worked incredibly hard to gain their grades and despite the confusion over how grades were awarded, we celebrate the successes of each of our students. Again our staff worked with great integrity and honesty to ensure that the Centre Assessed Grades we submitted were as fair and accurate as possible. On the next page, I've set out the updated process that schools had to follow to calculate the Centre Assessed Grades and how the final GCSE grades have been calculated.

Well done to the GCSE class of 2020! You deserve your success and we look forward to welcoming many of you back into our Sixth Form. For those who are moving on to life outside of Duke's, we also wish you every success in your next steps and hope you leave us with happy memories.

Alan Hardie, CEO

Congratulations to all students in class 2020

Students celebrated collecting their GCSE results after a turbulent year



How have GCSE results been calculated in 2020?

When lockdown was announced, the Government cancelled all GCSE and vocational exams. Instead the grades were to be calculated based on Centre Assessed Grades (CAG) and student rankings. The simplified version of the process is:

1. Schools calculated a CAG for every student for all of their subjects. This was based on all of the assessment evidence available for each student. This included any mock exams but is not solely based on mock exams. Schools were instructed to make this as accurate as possible for work up to that point. It was not permitted for schools to be optimistic and base grades on potential which had not yet been achieved.
2. Schools were asked to place all students in rank order for each subject. This means that if, say, 5 students were given a grade 9 for GCSE in a subject, teachers had to decide which student was top and would be ranked 1 and so on. This happens at each grade to produce a rank order for all students in each subject.
3. The rank order and the CAGs were very carefully checked by at least two teachers, head of subject and senior leaders. At Duke's, we also used a national system where schools shared their CAGs anonymously to ensure that these were in line with similar schools. This was very important as schools were told that over predicting CAGs would lead to the actual grades being lowered.
4. The grades and rank order were checked again by senior staff and submitted to the exam boards. Schools expected that the CAGs would be used to calculate the results.
5. As you are probably aware, the grades were then recalculated by OFQUAL using a statistical model and this would have been the results that the students received. It was expected that across the country, 40% of grades awarded would be lower than the CAG, which the Government eventually decided was unfair and unacceptable.
6. Following the many problems nationally with the A level results, the Government made a U turn on Tuesday afternoon and changed the system for GCSE results. **The results which students have received today are the CAG result, unless the grade calculated by the OFQUAL model was higher, in which case students receive the higher grade.**
7. The grades for BTEC subjects are being reviewed and will be reissued next week. Schools were only informed about this last night!
8. The appeal process is very limited. Students can only appeal their grade if they can show that either a school did not follow the CAG calculation properly or have evidence of discrimination against them.
9. Any student who is unhappy with their grade in any GCSE subject will have the chance to take exams in October and November. These exams are not counted as resits and if a student gets a lower grade in the exam than one they have just received then they keep their original grade.

A prayer from Sally Milner, NCEAT Chaplain

Almighty God

We thank you that you are with us every day of our lives,

As examination results are opened

We give thanks for the hard work and commitment of all our students and staff

Rejoice with those who are rejoicing

Comfort any who are disappointed, confused or angry

May they all feel your loving presence today.

Guide our students as they make decisions on their next steps in life.

We make our prayer through Jesus Christ who was raised to new life. Amen.

Sally Milner, Trust Chaplain

@NCEAChaplain

Castle School celebrates class of 2020

This year Castle School has 3 students leaving from Year 11. A rather different 'final year', but we are so pleased that they have all managed to secure their first choices for their next stage as they move on from Castle School.



Tiger Allen has worked incredibly hard during his time in school, achieving qualifications in English and Maths as well as gaining ASDAN accreditations in developing his independence.

Tiger is moving onto Azure in Cramlington where he will be able to continue his studies and apply everything he has learned in school—good luck Tiger!

Aaron Kraljic has used his time school very well. In addition to developing his confidence and physical skills, he has also achieved a qualification in English, together with ASDAN accreditation—Transition Challenge. Aaron is moving on to Buzz Learning in Ashington to continue his studies—good luck Aaron!



Justin White is also moving on to Buzz Learning where he will be able to build on all the skills he has developed during his school career. Justin leaves Castle with qualifications in English and Maths together with accreditations gained through the ASDAN programmes—good luck Justin!

We wish Tiger, Aaron & Justin all the very best but we will miss you all!

