



**Richmond upon
Thames College**

Your future in your hands – Making the most of learning during lockdown

GCSE and A level qualifications

Earlier this week, the Prime Minister announced that GCSE and A level examinations are cancelled for this year. This was followed by an announcement given by the Secretary of State for Education, indicating that teachers' estimated grades will be used to determine students' qualification results. This means that your knowledge, skills and abilities will be assessed in an alternative way. At this stage, no further details have been given as to what this will entail, but the new Head of Ofqual (the exams and qualifications regulator) has indicated that evidence for replacement grades could include tests, homework, mock exams and teachers' observations. Given that we are only one term into the academic year, it is almost certain that teachers will be required to base these estimated grades not only on work completed to date, but also on students' work from now until the end of the academic year.

Vocational qualifications

You will be aware from earlier communications that the Government has allowed examinations for vocational qualifications to go ahead this term, giving colleges the choice as to whether to run these as planned. As is the case with most colleges across the country, RuTC has made the decision, based on safety, health & wellbeing and fairness, not to run the majority of the vocational examination papers that were scheduled for this term, as has already been communicated to you.

At this stage, it is the Government's intention that those vocational examination papers scheduled for the Summer term will also be allowed to go ahead, and we will monitor this situation closely and respond accordingly. For vocational qualifications without examination papers, the current intention is that these will be assessed as usual – again, we will monitor this situation for any further updates and respond accordingly. As with GCSEs and A levels, no further details have been given yet as to any alternative ways in which vocational qualifications will be assessed, but the Department for Education (DfE) has stated that students will not be disadvantaged in these circumstances.

Functional Skills qualifications

Assessments for Functional Skills qualifications are due to take place later this year. We will continue to monitor the DfE guidance and make a judgement accordingly as to whether these can go ahead as planned. We will keep you informed of all decisions as they are made.

What do you need to do?

Your grades will now be continually assessed by your lecturers – this means that the work you do in class and for homework, the knowledge you can demonstrate, the tests and assessments you complete, the projects you work on, the presentations you deliver or the portfolio you create, will all be used to assess you and what you have learnt. If you have applied for a Higher Education course through UCAS and have been told your predicted grades, please do not assume that these are the grades that will be estimated for you by your teacher as part of this alternative grading process. Your UCAS predicted grades are based on your

performance to date, your level of achievement at the time the prediction was made and a projection of your trajectory from then until the end of the course based on these factors. In any normal year, it is up to each individual student to put in the work that will determine whether they ultimately achieve their predicted grade, and this year is no exception. You – and only you – have the power ensure that you meet, or even exceed, your predicted grade. The opportunity for you to showcase your ability is in your hands. This is your time to shine and make the most of your learning at college.

It is therefore vital that you treat everything you do from now until the end of your course as work that will contribute to your final grade and that you **continue to engage fully in your learning**. This includes English and Maths classes, where attendance and ongoing communication with your lecturers will be essential to your success.

This means that you must:

- Attend every timetabled lesson and continue with your learning – a missed online class may affect your tutor's ability to assess you
- Complete all set work – the more you do, the greater the opportunity to achieve higher grades
- Get involved – be an active participant in the learning process and find ways to demonstrate what you have learned
- Go the extra mile – if there are any opportunities for additional project work, work placements or other experiences, put yourself forward

Please remember that all timetabled lessons will be taught 'live' via Microsoft Teams for at least the first part of the lesson. In some cases the entire lesson will be delivered live, while in other cases live content will be followed by the setting of work to be completed during the remainder of the timetabled lesson.

Attendance at remote lessons will be recorded in the same way as would normally be the case for on-site lessons and, where absences are noted, these will be followed up with support and disciplinary measures as would normally be the case.

What do higher grades mean for you?

By maintaining momentum and staying focused on your work, you will maximise your opportunities to achieve the highest possible grade. This in turn will:

- improve your CV when applying for jobs
- put you ahead of the competition when applying for apprenticeship vacancies
- improve your chances of obtaining a place on popular degree courses at distinguished universities

What's next?

Ofqual and the DfE are expected to begin consulting with colleges and schools next week on the detail of the proposed methods by which teachers will be required to assess students' grades. RuTC will be engaging fully in the consultation process. We will of course keep you informed of all developments at the appropriate time. In the meantime, **please do not contact your teachers asking for details about the process or seeking to influence their estimations of your grade** – as soon as we have the details we will inform you.

Kind regards

Jason Jones

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