

Tuesday 5 January 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

RE: BTEC/Vocational Exams – January Series 2021

The DfE have just announced tonight, that schools will decide if their pupils will go ahead with BTEC exams in England this week as the government shifts its policy in the wake of new national restrictions.

Ministers had been facing growing calls to cancel vocational exams due to concerns over students' safety regarding the new variant of Covid-19, and fairness.

It is not yet clear what will take their place but having assessed the current risks amid the highest number of confirmed positive cases nationally, the highest recorded death rate nationally, a 3<sup>rd</sup> national lockdown and huge amount of stress and anxiety amongst our community we have reluctantly decided to cancel ALL vocational exams with immediate effect for Ditton Park students for health & safety reasons associated with the pandemic. This includes the two exams scheduled for tomorrow, Wednesday 6 January 2021.

We have not taken this decision lightly but feel that the wellbeing and safety of our students is our priority.

The Association of Colleges (AoC) and the National Union of Students (NUS) have both called for the exams to be scrapped as they say it is unsafe to make students go into schools and colleges to do tests.

Meanwhile, the leader of the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) said it feels "pretty impossible" to run the exams as it will "increase the unfairness" on students who cannot attend.

In a letter to the skills minister Gillian Keegan, David Hughes, chief executive of the AoC, said it was "simply untenable" to ask college staff and students to ignore the stay at home message to sit exams.

He said: "It is patently not safe for them and their families, even with the best mitigations a college/school can put in place. To go ahead with this exam series now would also be unfair on students.



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Nick Caulfield – Principal



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“The stress of the pandemic will undoubtedly affect their performance, probably has affected their preparation, and could lead to results which are potentially very unfair.”

Looking very closely at all of the information currently available to us it seems that asking our students to travel to school at the start of a national lockdown and sit in an exam hall or classroom goes against all the advice we are now getting from the government and other sources. Therefore, regardless of the many measures we have put into place to make our school safe we cannot ignore the seriousness of this covid-19 variant.

We will ensure that staff are available to talk with any student who needs our support as we are aware that this decision may cause unavoidable disruption for some. As soon as we have the information regarding what is going to take the place of these exams, we will let you know.

Yours faithfully



Nick Caulfield

Principal



Chris McNab

Associate Principal