

6th January 2021

Dear Parents, Carers and Students

Ref: Year 11 Examination, Monday 11th January 2021 **Creative iMedia**

I hope that this letter finds you and your family safe and well. I wanted to contact you specifically in regard to the **Year 11 OCR Creative iMedia** exam that is scheduled to take place next Monday afternoon. At present, we have 39 Year 11 students due to take this exam and I know you will have been asking yourself questions about whether or not it is still going to happen following the announcements from government this week. As I am sure you can imagine, the detail regarding the cancelling of the exams for Yr11 in the summer and these January exams is only just emerging. The official guidance from the exam board currently is that, "...**schools and colleges can continue with the vocational and technical exams that are due to take place in January, where they judge it right to do so**".

We also have over 140 Year 10 students scheduled to take exams on Monday morning and I can confirm that I have cancelled those exams on the basis of health and safety. However, in regard to the Year 11 students the situation is slightly different. **It is my recommendation that you do not sit the exam on Monday however if you wish to, we will make a covid-19 secure environment available for you in order to allow you to complete this exam.**

In light of the government announcement on Monday evening of this week about the cancelling of the GCSE and BTEC exams in the summer, it has left a big question mark over these January exams. Having discussed the situation with our subject teachers, we feel that on the balance of the information we have available to us, the best course of action would be to not sit the paper next week. The details about how the final grades will be awarded is not yet published and I would expect that the finer details about this will not be available until mid-March at the earliest. The Secretary of State for Education is due to make a statement this afternoon however this is not likely to contain the exact details over how the GCSEs, BTECs and A-Level grades will be awarded. Our experience of Summer 2020 tells us that there will be a mixture of teacher assessment and formal assessment (in some guise). That teacher assessment will be informed from all of a students' work in school, such as class work, engagement in remote learning, tests and mock exams, controlled assessment and coursework, etc. Ultimately, our staff will make a judgement about each students' performance based on all of the evidence that we have.

To that end, in sitting the exam next week, it may be that you are able to perform well and this will offer us yet more evidence of your abilities. This will of course be taken into account when staff make their judgements alongside all other evidence. However, this in turn causes a risk, in that it may be that you do not perform as well as you would perhaps wish, and therefore it may have a detrimental effect on the pool of evidence that we will use to formulate our judgements. It must also be noted that the exam itself next week will have to be carried out in a "Covid-19 Secure"

environment, therefore it would require, among many other things, the spacing of exam desks at a minimum of 3m apart, all students wearing masks throughout the exam itself, the exam room itself being temperature controlled to a low temperature with a constant air flow ventilation running through the room, etc. These conditions are not conducive to effective exam performance; these will be stressful circumstances and not necessarily a positive examination environment. It maybe that it will have a detrimental impact on their ability to perform to the best of their ability in the exam itself.

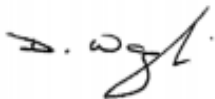
I am however not cancelling the exam. I am essentially giving you the option of sitting it if you so wish. For example, it may be that you feel ready for this exam and that you have fully prepared for it, and that the conditions in which you will sit the exam will not adversely affect you. It may also be that you feel that the evidence that we have in regard to your performance so far is not as good as you would wish. Therefore, if you feel that this exam will give you an opportunity to give us further evidence of your ability and potential, then I would recommend you do sit the paper next week. If you choose not to sit the exam, then in order to get your final grade, you must complete and submit the coursework over the next seven weeks. All students will have to complete this coursework however due to the nature of the assessment, if you do not sit the exam then the coursework must be submitted in order to gain the qualification. Even with this in mind, it is my recommendation that you do not sit the exam, that you engage fully in the coursework and submit to us the best possible evidence of your abilities as you can.

In order to prepare the "Covid-19 Secure" examination environment, I need a response from every student informing us over whether or not you wish to sit the exam. Please e-mail exams@gaa.org.uk with your full name stating whether or not you wish to sit the OCR Creative iMedia exam on Monday afternoon. We will then collate all of the responses and provide further logistical details for those who will be sitting the paper.

I know that some of you will feel disappointed and confused by all that is going on with regard to these exams, hence I wanted to get this note to you as soon as practically possible after the government announcements from Monday and Tuesday. I am sending this note to you in advance of hearing further from government today in regard to the summer exams, however it is clear that the summer exam season for Yr11 has been cancelled on the basis of health and safety and missed learning.

I will write to you again over the next few days regarding the summer series of exams once we have more details from central government however our immediate priority is that of the Yr11 BTEC Health and Social Care exam next Monday afternoon. Please e-mail us your decision to exams@gaa.org.uk (putting "OCR Creative iMedia Yr11" as the subject title of the e-mail) by 9am on Friday 8th January 2020.

Yours faithfully



Mr David Waugh
Principal