St. Colman's College, Violet Hill, 46 Armagh Road, Newry, Co. Down BT35 6PP

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15 December 2020

Exceptional Assessment Adaptations (for 2020-2021) GCSE

Dear S2 Parents/ Guardians

Your son has experienced many challenges since he commenced his GCSE studies in September 2019. He has had to contend with the consequences of lockdown from March 2020, the withdrawal of opportunities to sit modules in Summer 2020, the consequence of close contact tracing from September 2020, the amendments to assessment which have been introduced across a range of GCSE subjects for examination in Summer 2021 as well as having to ensure the society wide consequences of this Covid-19 pandemic. These have been difficult times!

The College has received communication from CCEA in relation to the assessments which are going to be used for awarding in August 2021 and your son has been told about the changes/addendums to each of his subjects by his individual teachers i.e. the mandatory topics which are to be included, and the optional topics which have been removed.

This correspondence is to inform you of the policy that the College is introducing in relation to these addendums for the summer series of examinations 2021.

While each of the addendums to the GCSE specifications for 2020-2021 state that schools should deliver the "full specification content", St. Colman's College, like all other schools, has to prioritise the teaching time available and has an obligation to ensure that students are as fully prepared as possible for the examinations they are required to sit in Summer 2021. As a result, we recommend that students only sit examinations in the mandatory units in each of their GCSE subjects. These are the units that will be focused on in terms of delivery of each subject. The optional curriculum material which remains to be covered after the mandatory elements of the courses are completed are less of a priority, although each teacher will endeavour to deliver this to as full an extent as practicable.

If, following communication with students and parents/guardians, students are determined to sit the optional units, then they will do so in the clear knowledge that the school has been unable to prepare them for those optional assessments to the same extent as would otherwise be expected if there had not been such interruption to teaching and associated reduction to the assessment requirements.

It is worth noting that CCEA anticipates that the vast majority of students will only sit the mandatory units.

It is important that it is clearly understood that students are able to be awarded from the full range of grades if they only sit the mandatory units. If however, your son sits the optional units, he will be awarded the best outcome from either sitting the mandatory unit only, or sitting the mandatory and the optional unit.

Your son's class teacher and subject head of department will ensure that your son is fully aware of the optional and mandatory units in each subject and the material he is required to study.

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Further information is available on CCEA's website https://ccea.org.uk/key-stage-4/gcse/subjects where the addendums to each subject can be viewed.

In summary

- Your son has been told about the addendum to each of his subject specifications
- Your son is only required to sit the mandatory units in each of his GCSE subjects.
- In sitting the mandatory units, your son will be awarded from the full range of grades available (A* - G).
- Your son's teachers will prioritise teaching the mandatory units which will be assessed by examination in Summer 2021.
- Once teaching the mandatory units is complete, the teacher will deliver to some extent, the material contained in the optional units.
- If your son elects to sit the optional units, this is done with the knowledge that he has not been prepared for these to the same extent as the mandatory units.
- Your son's grade in August 2021 will not be negatively affected by his outcome in the optional units.

If you have any further queries in relation to this matter for specific subjects, please contact your son's subject teacher or for more general enquiries, his Year Head Mr. Garbhan Boyle.

Yours faithfully

Mr. Cormac McKinney
Principal