**Biology Department Assessment Policy (AQA) 2021-23**

**The Importance of Feedback**

Learning will not happen instantly and takes time; attending lessons is not enough, you also need to be working outside of class, to learn new information and consolidate learning. In the process, you will make mistakes but hopefully feedback will enable you to learn from these mistakes. Better to make a mistake during the year and correct it, than make your first mistake in the actual exam! Feedback is essential for your learning and will consist of written (teacher marking), peer (where you feedback on someone else’s work in the class) and self (where you assess yourself).

**The Final Assessment**

Final assessment at the end of the second year is made up of **three** exams (2 hours each). Paper 1 will exam topics 1-4 and required practicals 1 -6 , paper 2 will examine topics 5-8 and required practicals 7 -12, paper 3 will examine topics 1-8, required practical 1-12 and will include a 25 mark holistic essay.

**Weekly Independent Tasks (Homework)**

Homework does not necessarily need to be completed at home! You can use free periods during the day to complete these tasks outside of lessons. To keep a good work/life balance, you might like to treat College as an 0845 to 1615 day and use your free periods in the library completing tasks. This will minimise the work you need to complete at home and might make you more productive!!

The classes are shared equally between two teachers for 2.25 hours, with each teacher delivering one of the two units. Each week, homework will be set and could take up to 5 hours in total. Each teacher therefore could set you up to 2 ½ hours homework per week. If the homework only takes you 1 hour for a week, then you will have a further 1 ½ hours to conduct further reading and consolidate learning. Homework tasks will consist of two types:

* *‘PREP WORK’:* Not all homework will be marked. It will be given a quick inspection in class and then will involve peer and self-assessment as part of a class exercise. This work will ‘prepare’ you for the lesson.
* *REVISION WORKSHEETS and past exam practice:* Throughout the year, for each unit, there will be 6-8 revision worksheets set. These revision worksheets should take you 2.5 hours to complete and consist of a summary of the work we have done in class on 2 sides of A4. We will also set a range of past exam questions to help with exam technique and to check your understanding.

## **Benchmark Assessment Tasks**

Throughout the course, you will be set benchmark assessments. These will consist of the type of questions that you would see in the exam and will cover the topics covered to date. How you perform in these assessments will be formally logged and will directly contribute towards your ARG. Benchmarks provide a valuable opportunity for feedback regarding your knowledge and understanding as well as an opportunity to develop your exam technique. Feedback can take the following forms:

* *WRITTEN TEACHER FEEDBACK:* Some benchmark assessments and home works will receive written feedback in the form of comments that relate directly to the assessment criteria of the exam board.  Alongside this, comments and questions will be posed about how to improve.
* *VERBAL TEACHER FEEDBACK:* This may take place during lesson time however formal 1-2-1’s will also occur in November and March at which point progress with assessments can be discussed.
* *WRITTEN PEER FEEDBACK*: One some occasions, your teacher will ask you to formally mark and feedback on a classmate’s common work in lesson. This is valuable experience for you to not only learn from others but gain a better understanding of the assessment objectives and mark schemes.
* *REFLECTION AND TARGET SETTING:* After each assessment, students will be expected to reflect on the written/verbal feedback from their teacher and set themselves targets for improvement in the period in question.

Benchmarks and home works tasks are an ideal way to assess your knowledge and understanding and get valuable feedback.

**Tracking your Progress: Student Reviews, Action Plans and Parents Evenings**

The College’s policy is to deal with the student first but we also report to your parents at regular intervals to let them know how you are progressing and to inform them of what our expectations are through four Student Reviews (Reports) spread throughout the two years at College and also four parents evenings.     If the department feel you are under-performing based on evidence such as benchmark grades and your approach to learning in between these periods, then your Lead Subject Tutor may place you onto a Formal Department Action Plan and we will formally write to your parents after a 1-2-1 with yourself and to try and get you back on track in a supportive way.

 **Student Review 2, the ARG and Predicted Grades**

At the end of the first year (June 2021), your Lead Tutor will have a 1-2-1 to discuss your Annual Review Grade or ARG and also finalise your Predicted Grade which might be used for UCAS applications for University and other destinations.

The ARG is determined by your Lead Tutor in communication with your other teacher and will rely on the following evidence base:

1. **Benchmark Checkpoints Performance Grades (1 to 4).**
2. **Approach to Learning:** How you are engaging in your learning, evidenced by attendance, punctuality, ability to meet weekly deadlines with quality work, how you have sought out extra support via workshops and your overall communication with your teachers.

The ARG plays a key part in determining the context in which you progress to the second year. Students who receive an A\*-D grade (A-level) are encouraged to continue with their studies into the 2nd year. However for students who receive a U or E Grade (A-level) as their ARG, it suggests that for whatever reason they have struggled with the transition from Level 2 Courses (GCSE) to Level 3 Courses (A-level/BTEC). This will be evidenced by poor performances throughout their benchmarks and an inconsistent or poor approach to learning in their student reviews and via formal Action Plans. Students who receive a U Grade we would not recommend to continue with the course and they would need to speak to a Senior Tutor about alternative pathways.

The College adopts a consistent and optimistic approach to predicting grades to ensure that they are both aspirational and achievable. A predicted grade is what we believe a student is likely to achieve by the conclusion of their course in positive circumstances and the predicted grade provides universities and colleges with some understanding of a student’s academic potential alongside their Personal Statement and a written Reference from their Personal Tutor.

The ARG is important in forming the basis for the predicted grade as well but the predicted grade will also be aspirational for the students’ ambitions although it must remain realistic and cannot be based on the idea that only now will the student start to work harder in the second year!

**COURSEWORK DEADLINES**

All required practicals and associated work to be completed by April of the second year. You can access the College policy on Godalming Online.

* **Marks released to students on SELF: May 2023 –** The final moderated mark for all the coursework components together will be displayed on your SELF page on this date. The exam board stipulates that no formal grade can be released to students by the teacher (please do not ask!).
* **Marks submitted to the exam board: End of May 2023 –** The department will submit your final moderated mark to the exam board.

**Other Considerations**

* *LATE POLICY:* In line with the ‘College Assessment Policy’, the department are under no obligation to provide feedback to a student who does not meet the internal deadlines for weekly independent tasks, benchmark assessments or coursework drafts. Please be warned that a failure to meet the final coursework deadline is the equivalent to missing the exam and it will be recommended that the student should be removed from the course. Students who fail to prepare adequately for the lesson as requested, maybe excluded for part of the lesson and asked to work independently at the back of the classroom. A continued failure to meet ‘PREP’ work requirements will result in a reference to the pastoral team and a phone call home to parents.
* *RETURNED WORK:* Work will be assessed and returned within 10 working days of it being submitted unless it is the final coursework submission. The exam board stipulates that no feedback or formal grade can be released to students by the teacher. The exam board reserve the right to inform you of the final grade in August with your results. Please do not ask the teacher for your final mark as they will be unable to provide it.
* *PLAGIARISIM:*  Plagiarism is submitting another person’s written work as one’s own original work or using someone else’s idea without referencing the source or using pictorial work without permission or referencing the source. If there is a suspicion of plagiarism, the Head of Department and Senior Tutor will be informed and a meeting will take place. If a student is found guilty, they will be subject to disciplinary action by the College and the awarding body will be informed. Students should be aware that the College is subscribed to software designed to detect plagiarism.
* *ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS FOR EXAMS:* These are pre-examination adjustments for candidates based on evidence of need and normal way of working which must approved by the Learning Support department.  For example, use of a computer or extra time in the exam.  Since these arrangements are your ‘normal way of working’, you must practice them in class and with your homeworks – please see the Learning Support department for how you might do this.  Homework is always set to take between 4.5 to 6 hours to allow students who have extra time for example, more time to complete the homework compared to their peers.  Equally, in timed assessments it is vital that we are accommodating any access arrangements you might have.  Your teachers will speak to you individually, and in confidence about how they will best be able to support you through your studies with us.

**Benchmark Checkpoints, Student Reviews (Reports) and Mock Exams 2021-23**

Below is an overview of all the key assessment checkpoints

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| **CHECKPOINT** | **DATE** | **DETAILS** |
| **Benchmark 1 Checkpoint** | Oct 2021 | **One hour Mock Exam on Topics 3.1 and 3.2 on both sides of the course**A mixture of past exam questions |
| **Parents Evening (For All)** | Nov 2021 | **Meetings with your parents to discuss how you have settled in and transferred from GCSE to A-level learning based upon:**1. **Approach to learning** (how you are engaging in your learning, evidenced by attendance, punctuality, ability to meet weekly deadlines with quality work, how you have sought out extra support via workshops and your overall communication with your teachers)
2. **Performance Grade** in Benchmark 1 and from your homework tasks
 |
| **XMAS BREAK** |  |  |
| **Benchmark 2 Checkpoint** | Dec 21/Jan 2022 | **One hour Mock Exam on Topics 3.1 and 3.2 on both sides of the course**A mixture of past exam questions |
| **Student Review 1** | Jan 2022 | **A review of your progress in the first term (12-13 weeks of teaching) after a 1-2-1 with your Lead Tutor:** 1. **Performance grade (A to U)** (based on benchmark 1 and 2 but also your homework tasks)
2. **Approach to Learning** (how you are engaging in your learning, evidenced by attendance, punctuality, ability to meet weekly deadlines with quality work, how you have sought out extra support via workshops and your overall communication with your teachers).
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| **Parents Evening (Targeted)** | Mar 2022 | **Meetings with your parents primarily where teachers may have a concern about your progress since Student Review 1 in January.** |
| **EASTER BREAK** |  |  |
| **Benchmark 3 Checkpoint** | March 2022 | **One hour Mock Exams on Topics 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4 on both sides of the course**A mixture of past exam questions |
| **Benchmark 4 Checkpoint** | July 2022 | **One hour Mock Exam on Topics 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4 on both sides of the course**A mixture of past exam questions  |
| **Student Review 2** | July 2022 | **A review of your progress for the academic year (30-35 weeks of teaching) after a 1-2-1 with your Lead Tutor** 1. Approach to Learning
2. Performance Grade (Annual Review Grade or ‘ARG’ – performance for whole year (see notes above in main doc.)
3. Predicted Grade
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| **SUMMER BREAK** |  |  |
| **Benchmark 5 Checkpoint** | Oct 2022 | **One hour Mock Exam on Topics 3.1, 3.2, 3.5** A mixture of past exam questions |
| **Parents Evening (All)** | Oct 2022 | **Meetings with your parents to discuss how you have settled in to the second phase of learning:**1. **Approach to learning** (how you have engaged since Student Review 2 including completion of summer homework and the first five weeks of teaching – deadlines met, engagement in class and communication with teacher)
2. **Performance** with reference to your draft coursework mark and to talk about the final deadline for after half-term.
3. **How to support you:** Discuss how parents can further support you and what is coming up in this year
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| **Benchmark 6 Checkpoint** | Dec 2022 | **One hour Mock Exam on** 3.1, 3.2, 3.5A mixture of past exam questions |
| **Student Review 3** | Dec 2023 | **A review of your progress for the academic year since last Student Review (July) after a 1-2-1 with your Lead Tutor**1. Approach to Learning
2. Performance Grade (based upon benchmark 6 and homework tasks) compared to Predicted Grade
 |
| **XMAS BREAK** |  |  |
| **Timed essay** | Feb 2023 | **25 mark timed essay** |
| **Benchmark 7 Checkpoint** | Mar 2023 | **Two hour Mock Exam**Paper 1 or Paper 2 |
| **Student Review 4** | Mar 2023 | **A review of your progress for the academic year (30-35 weeks of teaching) after a 1-2-1 with your Lead Tutor (see above)** 1. Approach to Learning
2. Performance Grade (based upon benchmark 7 Mock Exam only) compared to Predicted Grade
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| **Parents Evening (Targeted)** | Apr 2023 | **Meetings with your parents primarily where teachers may have a concern about your progress since Student Review 4.** |
| **EASTER BREAK** |  |  |

**Rationale for Assessment Programme**

The purpose of Benchmark Assessments is to ensure that you are fully prepared to sit your three 2 hour exams at the end of your second year, and perform at your highest ability. These exams will take place under timed conditions, and therefore so will our benchmarks. Any students who have exam concessions will be entitled to the same arrangements in our benchmarks (e.g. extra time). The first few benchmarks will introduce you to the types of examination questions at A level, and you will become familiar with both the short answer and the extended answer styles. At the end of the first year, in Benchmark 4, you will be tested on a whole year’s worth of content. This is the assessment in your first year that most resembles one of the terminal exams, and is therefore a good indicator of student performance. Consequently, Benchmark 4 is a valuable piece of evidence in determining the ARG.

In the second year, students are introduced to the 25 mark essay questions. They will have to write one essay when they complete paper 3 at the end of the course, so these are included in some of the later benchmarks in the Upper sixth to allow students to practice. In February of the second year, students will complete a full 2 hour paper under exam conditions in the hall. This big mock exam is a key assessment and should be treated very carefully – it is perhaps the only time you will be able to sit in an exam hall under timed conditions to complete an assessment.  It is positioned there for you to learn from the experience with enough time to correct any issues before you sit the final A-level assessment after Easter.

**Grade Boundaries**

When marking benchmark assessments, all teachers will use exam board produced materials to award marks. Teachers will regularly meet to discuss and moderate papers to ensure consistency. The grade boundaries are decided by using a normal distribution of outcomes. This ensures that all students have a realistic chance of accessing each grade. We also compare our grade boundaries to external ones used by the exam board, and this reference point can also help ensure that the grades we award are both fair and realistic.