



## St Columb's College

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6<sup>th</sup> January 2021

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s)/Carer(s)

You may be aware that the Minister of Education announced this afternoon that he has taken the decision to cancel all GCSE, AS and A2-level examinations this academic year.

In the short-term this means that there will be no GCSE examinations in English or Mathematics next week and no GCSE Science modules in February.

The Minister has also announced that work will continue on the proposed alternative awarding arrangements and has stated that further details will be brought forward as soon as possible.

Whilst the Minister's statement to the Assembly provides some degree of clarity with regard to examinations set by CCEA, we await further details about what the awarding plans are for examinations set by English and Welsh Boards and about Vocational qualifications.

Parents/guardians/carers, students and staff will now rightly be asking what all of this means in terms of the work that is being done as part of the current period of remote learning (which has now been confirmed as lasting until the February 2021 Mid-Term Break). In the absence of specific details about the proposed awarding arrangements – and on exactly what data/information grades will be based - it is *essential* that all students continue to engage fully with the work that their teachers have already set and will continue to set in the coming days and weeks. For example, pupils' progress in their subjects may be used in some way, shape or form when final grades are determined by the Awarding Bodies.

I appreciate that this announcement will bring a wide range of reactions – from gratitude about the fact that a decision has finally been taken, to disappointment that pupils will not have the opportunity to sit examinations that they have prepared diligently for over a long period of time. I also appreciate that the fact that we still have to wait some time to find out what happens next will cause frustration; I understand all of those feelings. Please be assured, though, that as soon as we have further details on these arrangements we will let you know.

These remain challenging times; above all, please stay safe!

Yours faithfully

*FJM Madden*  
**Principal**

