

## Update on the awarding of GCSE and A Level grades

As our students begin their return to school, our attention turns to the awarding of GCSE and A Level grades.

Initial announcements were made and general guidance published by the Department for Education on 25 February. This guidance gave an overview of the process and an indication of the sort of evidence that teachers can use to generate grades. Further detailed guidance and assessment materials will be sent to schools by the exam boards before the end of term.

This outlines the process by addressing the sorts of questions we expect students and parents will have at this stage.

### How will grades be awarded this summer?

Grades for GCSEs, A levels, and most other qualifications including applied generals will be based on a process involving teacher assessment against national standards, internal quality assurance, and external quality assurance by the exam boards.

The national process defined by the Department for Education and the exams' regulator, Ofqual is as follows:

1. Teachers will **assess students against a national standard**, which will be defined by the exam boards when they publish further guidance before the Easter break.
2. Departments will submit grades to exam boards only after they have been **quality assured by the school**. Our own internal quality assurance process must be signed off by the exam board before departments submit grades to ensure it is rigorous and in line with national standards.
3. Our results will be **quality assured externally** by the exam boards, which may include random sampling of our evidence.
4. If the exam boards are confident in our submitted results, **then the exam boards will award students their final grades**.
5. A Level results will be published by exam boards on 10 August. UCAS confirmation will take place on the same day. GCSE results will be published on 12 August.
6. If students do not think their results are accurate, they will have the right to **appeal**.
7. Appeals will be managed by the exam boards. Grades can go up or down as a result of an appeal.

### So, do teachers award the grade?

Simply: no. The grade students achieve will start with their teacher's assessment of their performance across a range of evidence (see below). This is measured against a nationally-defined standard, not the teacher's own opinion. This assessment is then subject to both internal and external quality assurance before the final grade is awarded by the exam body as usual.

### What school based assessment evidence will be used?

Teachers are able to draw on a range of assessment evidence from across a student's study of the course. This may include homework tasks, past exam paper questions, internal tests, practice exams, and papers set by the exam boards. This may include evidence from before the second lockdown, as well as evidence from now up until June 2021 - which may include those assessments sent to schools by exam boards at the end of this month.

### What are exam boards sending to schools?

The exam boards are producing assessment materials, which will be sent to us before Easter, which teachers can use. Exam board questions are only one of the many pieces of evidence we will use to assess students this summer. Different departments may use different sources of evidence, and there is no requirement for any one type of assessment to be used - it's about a performance across a range of evidence.

### **Will grades be decided by an algorithm?**

No, unlike last year's original plans, students' grades will not be changed or restricted by a formula. The internal and external quality assurance/checking measures will all be done by humans, not an algorithm.

### **What about the loss of learning caused by the impact of Covid?**

This year, because of the disruption caused by the pandemic, teachers will only assess students on content they have been taught. This means students will not be disadvantaged if they individually, their whole class or whole year group have been unable to complete their full course. Grades can only be awarded on evidence we have of a student's performance, even if that evidence covers less of the course than usual. Teachers will now start to focus in lessons on revising and assessing students on the content that has been delivered. Students who would usually have extra time in the exams will benefit from the same arrangements in teacher assessment.

### **Will grades be different between different schools and colleges?**

No. The standard against which teachers will be assessing students is set nationally by the exam boards. This is the standard that will be used during external quality assurance and appeals to ensure consistency and fairness across the system.

### **What will teachers discuss at parents evening?**

As with all parents evening meetings teachers will discuss strengths and areas of development. Discussions will be forward looking and teachers will focus on how students can work to best ensure they achieve the best grade possible. Teachers may refer to current performance up to this point, both in and out of lockdown, by referring to current grades. The current grade is NOT a prediction of the final grade. There are still assessments to be completed that will go towards the final grade

### **Can students and parents make the case for why a student should get a higher grade?**

Our teachers are already using their professional expertise to assess students on the content they have been taught. Teachers are unable to submit higher grades for students unless they have the evidence that they are consistently working at this level. If teachers submit higher grades without evidence they are committing exam malpractice.

### **Can students discuss their grades with teachers?**

Teachers will be able to discuss which evidence they are using to inform their judgement with students, including marked or graded pieces of work. However, teachers are not allowed to disclose the final submitted grades sent to the exam board.

Students should not attempt to second-guess the grade submitted, as teachers will be using a range of evidence to inform their final judgement. Students must not pressure teachers to reveal the grades they are submitting, or to increase the grades, as doing so may be considered exam malpractice.

### **When will teachers have to submit the grades?**

Departments must submit their grades to the exam boards by 18 June. In order for us to undertake our internal quality assurance checks we will have the grades collated before that final deadline

### **What will be happening in class between now and June?**

Teachers are working on schemes of work and lesson plans that will enable students to fully maximise their grade. They will continue to revisit and revise previous learning and assess students right up until the final deadline. Every lesson is therefore very important.

### **What should students do to improve their grades?**

There are still plenty of opportunities for students to maximise their grade. The best thing students can do is to continue to attend lessons on time, learn, act on feedback from their teachers, revise, and read around their subject. Their grade will be based on their performance, and so their outcomes are ultimately in their hands.