

Centre Assessed Grades – Process and Appeals

Following the cancellation of the summer exam and assessment period, centres were asked to provide **Centre Assessed Grades** for students in order for the Awarding Organisations to award qualification grades for students. The relevant documentation on this process can be found [here](#).

In summary, the process for awarding grades this year is:

1. The **college** put forward a **Centre Assessed Grade (CAG)**, and **rank order** of students within grades, to the exam board (Awarding Organisation)
2. The **Awarding Organisation** adjusts the CAGs if it thinks the centre has been too generous or harsh, at a cohort and subject level, and produces a **Calculated Grade**. The rank order does not change.
3. The **Calculated Grade** is published to students and is treated as a qualification in exactly the same way as if the exams had been taken.
4. Students can sit an **exam** in the Autumn (or in another exam period) and both Calculated Grade and exam grade will be valid.

Appeals against the Centre Assessed Grade or Calculated Grade.

- A. **The college can appeal to the Awarding Organisation** if we believe there has been an error in the process of awarding the Calculated Grade. The college will check that the rank order has been preserved and that any adjustments made look reasonable in comparison with our expected outcomes for this cohort of students. The Awarding Body must provide the college with details of the process followed to make any adjustments.
- B. **Students can raise a concern** with the college if they believe the CAG was calculated in a biased or discriminatory way, and that teachers did not behave with integrity or care during the process. **Students cannot appeal** against the professional judgement of the teachers in the awarding of the grade itself, and cannot request a review or second opinion of that grade.

OfQual information relating to Appeals following the release of the **Calculated Grades** can be found [here](#). Please read this in full before contacting the college if you have any concerns over the awarding of grades. The link also explains the nature of the Autumn exam series which students can enter if they want to improve on the grades awarded. Details on when this will happen, and how to enter will follow.

This document outlines the quality assurance process used by the college to ensure that the Centre Assessed Grades and rank order were decided in the fairest way possible for all students, using consistent methodologies on all courses with due regard [for unconscious bias](#).

1. **Clarity on rules.** All teaching staff had the instructions from OfQual and the Awarding Organisations and meetings were held with the Course Team Leaders of each of the qualification types (GCSE, A Level, UAL, BTEC and Cambridge Technicals).
2. **Professional judgement.** All staff were told to make holistic professional judgements based on the work and assessments completed prior to closure of college on the 20th March. Teachers were provided with a summary of the internal assessments (Key Assessments, including Mocks) as a reminder of the grades achieved by students in these rigorous tests. They also referred to their own mark books and knowledge of each student. Each Course Team agreed the weighting of available evidence based on previous experience (for example of coursework compared to mock exam results).
3. **Baseline data.** Course Teams were provided with a breakdown of the grades achieved by students in the last 3 years, as a benchmark for awarding an approximate number of grades at each level. This data provided a broad picture, but did not dictate a quota, or determine which students should be awarded each grade, based on prior attainment. Any student could be awarded any grade, based on their attainment during the course, not on what they had achieved in previous external exams.
4. **Checking of cohort ability compared to previous years.** Once all courses had completed the base grading exercise, these grades were loaded into ALPS Connect, which compares the grades awarded to those expected, according to the ability of the cohort. This determined whether the current cohort in each subject might be expected to do better or worse than the average of the past 3 years (I.e. if this was a stronger or weaker group of students compared to those in previous years). This then gave managers a starting point to see whether a course team had been harsh or over optimistic with the awarding of grades.
5. **Unconscious Bias check.** The data for each student was sent to the Sixth Form College Association data analysis team (called 6 Dimensions) who analysed by student groupings (for example male/female, prior achievement, ethnicity, free school meals) and reported on how the data compared to the national data set. For example, did the grades a subject awarded reflect what might be expected in terms of gender gap? If there were any outliers in this analysis, it was discussed with the course team. Where there were differences, the course team needed to provide the evidence for the decision.
6. **Individual student check.** Using ALPS Connect, students were identified who were awarded grades lower than might be expected, based on their GCSE grades. Each one was checked to make sure this award was consistent with assessment grades and the progress reported on during the course.
7. **SEND check.** As above, students with exam concessions, especially if awarded in the second year of the course, were checked to ensure teachers had taken into account any extra-time or other support that the student would've had if they had taken the exam.
8. **Revisions and approval.** Course Teams met and agreed the grades, often producing 10 or more iterations of the list. Once all these checks were approved by the line manager of each course, and then discussed with the VP and AVP, the Principal signed off on the submissions.
9. **Checking.** All grades submitted have been checked to ensure that no administrative errors have occurred in the transcription of grades from one place to another.

10. **Adjustment, post submission.** We are aware that the Awarding Organisations may still adjust these grades based on their own statistical modelling, using methodology not shared with the college during the process.
11. **Appeals from the Centre.** We will check the results when released in August and challenge awarding organisations if we think the grades have been unfairly adjusted.

FAQs

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-cancellation-of-gcses-as-and-a-levels-in-2020/coronavirus-covid-19-cancellation-of-gcses-as-and-a-levels-in-2020>

The main question asked in the run up to the process was: **why don't you just use the Predicted Grades?**

Predicted grades are not accurate at a whole college scale, the definition by UCAS is: *A predicted grade is the grade of qualification an applicant's school or college believes they're likely to achieve in positive circumstances.*

And

in the best interests of applicants, aspirational but achievable

<https://www.ucas.com/advisers/managing-applications/predicted-grades-what-you-need-know>

In other words, the college puts forward the most optimistic outcome for each student.

The CAGs process asked us to rank order students within each grade according to how secure we believed that judgement to be.

Why didn't we just use the Mock grades? The mocks are a vital part of the preparation for the real exams, giving students a practice opportunity and an indication of where they stand at that point in the year. However, they are not reliable predictors of final outcome on their own, for many students it is a wake-up call that prompts serious revision and preparation.

If I take an exam in the Autumn, and it is worse than the Calculated Grade, which will count? Both grades will be recognised, one does not overwrite the other. Technically you should probably declare both on any job applications, and we don't know what the universities will ask for.

Steve Dann
Vice Principal
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