

GCSE grading guidance and information

1) Introduction

On 4 January 2021, the Government announced that it was no longer fair for the Summer 2021 examination series for GCSE's to go ahead due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

2) Centre Policy

Every centre must produce a Centre Policy which will:

- Outline the roles and responsibilities of individuals in the centre
- Detail the training and support provided for newly qualified teachers (NQTs) and training around objectivity in decision making
- Set out the approach for the determination of grades including how evidence will be used
- Describe the process that will be adopted where a potential conflict of interest has been identified, such as where a teacher's relative is a student
- Outline the internal quality assurance processes in place including arrangements to standardise judgements and consider teacher assessed grades against results from previous years when exams have taken place (2017 to 2019)

3) External quality assurance process

The external quality assurance process consists of three main parts;

Stage 1 – Centre Policy review

The school must submit our centre policy and a summary documentation. Examination boards will then review.

Stage 2 – Virtual centre visits

Virtual centre visits are to be supportive with the aim of assisting centres to provide valid teacher assessed grades and to ensure the best possible systems are in place. Not all Schools will receive a centre visit.

Stage 3 – Post-submission sampling

The final stage of the quality assurance process is to confirm that centres have implemented what was in their submitted policies and that their submitted grades reflect this. The sampling process will provide confidence that the grades awarded by awarding organisations across the system command assurance.

Sampling of centres will be focussed on those schools with data that significantly diverges from previous exam years though some random sampling will also take place.

As a 'Turn-around school' our outcomes are likely to be significantly higher than those achieved in 2019. For this reason, we expect to be sampled.

4) Guidance on grading

Schools should ensure that students have the opportunity to show the full breadth of their knowledge and understanding in each subject based on what they have been taught. It is important

that grades represent a holistic, objective judgement based on evidence of each student's performance in each subject. Evidence should be used consistently across the class or cohort wherever possible. The evidence can be of different types and can come from across the course of study.

The following steps will be considered when grading;

Step 1 – Consider what has been taught.

All subjects have undertaken a subject review having considered what has been taught, the level of detail gone into and the conditions in which it was taught (remote or in school).

Students will only be assessed on the content taught with sufficient enough breadth and depth.

Step 2 – Collect the evidence

All subjects have considered what evidence there is of student performance, to make a holistic judgement of each student's performance.

Evidence used will include the following;

- Student work produced in response to assessment materials provided by the awarding organisation (End of year Exams)
- Non-exam assessment (NEA) work (often referred to as coursework), even if this has not been fully completed.
- Student work produced in centre-devised tasks that reflect the specification including: internal tests taken by students; mock exams taken over the course of study;

The evidence used will be consistent across the class or cohort within each subject.

Step 3: Evaluate the quality of the evidence

Consideration will be given to the following when determining student's teacher assessed grades:

- Coverage of assessment objectives – Subject leaders have produced an assessment blueprint to ensure end of year examinations reflect the disciplinary nature of their subject.
- Coverage of content – students will only be assessed on areas they have been taught
- Authenticity – is the evidence the student's own work?
- Level of control – was it taken in timed conditions? Was there an opportunity for redrafting? Was it supervised?
- Marking – All marking will follow the schools moderation guidelines

Step 4: Establish whether the proposed range of evidence is appropriate for all students

Wherever possible the same range of evidence will be used for all students in a class or cohort, although there may be individual students for whom the proposed evidence is not appropriate. The rationale for any exceptions will be documented within each subject's assessment record.

Before finalising grading decisions, teachers will satisfy themselves that each student has been taught the content in line with the proposed evidence. Students will be told what evidence is going to be used, so that they have the opportunity to raise any genuine and valid concerns.

The school has produced an overall assessment summary which outlines how each subject is to be graded which has already been shared with students and parents

Step 5: Assign a grade

Teachers' grading decisions will be subject to the school's overall quality assurance processes which will include;

- Pre-marking training for all assessments
- Marking to be moderated and recorded
- Paired evidence review between teacher and subject leader to determine grade
- Final evidence review between subject leader, deputy head of centre and head of centre.

Grades assigned will be based on a holistic, objective judgement of the evidence on the subject content they have been taught.

All subjects will use the exam board grade descriptors and grading exemplification available to help reach and corroborate the final grade.

Grade descriptors are general statements that give a high-level reflection of student performance characteristics. They are based on the assessment objectives for the relevant specification.

Grading exemplifications have been created for each specification. They use student responses from past papers and illustrate performance in previous summer exam series. The exemplification gives examples of the standards we will use to make grading judgements.

FINAL GRADES ARE NOT TO BE SHARED WITH STUDENTS UNTIL RESULTS DAY. TO DO SO IS
CONSIDERED MALPRACTICE

Additional grading points;

- For tiered GCSEs, the grade must reflect the tier of entry.
- Decisions about potential will not factor in the student's grades. Students will only be graded on the quality of work they produce / assessment scores received.
- At GCSE, to achieve grade 1, students' evidence will show that they have demonstrated engagement with sufficient content, achieved some credit across elements of the specification content, and achieved credit in some assessment objectives. Where the evidence for a student does not support this, the student will be graded unclassified (U).
- A grade derived based on a predicted trajectory or target grade is not permitted. It must be made using the range of evidence available.

5) Retention of evidence

It is important that evidence on which a student's grade is based, including copies of the student's work where available and any mark records, is retained safely by the centre; it will be needed to: support the centre's determination of students' grades; the internal and external quality assurance processes; and any appeals process. Centres must also retain any information relating to a student's access arrangements, or personal circumstances affecting student performance, which might need to be taken into account during the process of determining a student's grade. The evidence that is available can be considered by the awarding organisations if the student decides to appeal.

6) Internal quality assurance: using the data to inform the overall review of outcomes

After all grading decisions have been made, we will review the aggregate cumulative grade distribution for each subject. If outcomes are much higher than in previous years, or much lower, the reasons for it will be considered and documented. Comparisons will then be contextualised with other information at school level, for example data that suggests the cohort in a particular subject, or overall, is more or less able than in previous years. We will also consider the grades awarded to different groups of students.

We will make a record of these comparisons and the rationale for any variations as part of the internal quality assurance process, in order that it can be discussed with the awarding organisation during any external quality assurance checks.

Once the review is complete, the school will provide a statement explaining the rationale of the outcomes by subject and/or qualification type level for use during an expected quality assurance visit.

7) Use of assessment materials

Exam boards will provide assessment materials for use in Summer 2021. These materials can be used to generate evidence to help determine a grade for each student though use of these materials is optional.

As these assessment materials will be unsecure (teachers, student and parents will be able to view in advance), subjects will write their own end of year examinations using the assessment materials as guidance which will be sat blind (no students will have seen the assessment questions before).

The 2021 assessment materials are qualification-specific sets of questions covering key knowledge, understanding and skills

The assessment materials are groups of questions focused on discrete areas of a specification and may vary in breadth and demand depending on the topic. Therefore, unlike full past papers, there are no grade boundaries available. There is no requirement for the mark from an assessment to be converted into a grade, the mark should be considered alongside other pieces of evidence.

8) Reasonable adjustments and access arrangements

Students' approved access arrangements and/or reasonable adjustments will be put in place for any assessments used to determine teacher assessed grades as they would during a normal year. Teachers will be required to confirm whether the approved access arrangement/reasonable adjustment was in place for assessments which will be used to determine the student's grade. This must be recorded on a subject's Assessment Record. The school is obliged to securely hold on file all evidence used to determine the teacher assessed grades including access arrangements/reasonable adjustments provided, until the published deadline for appeals has passed.

9) Special consideration

Special consideration requests will work in a similar way they currently do where illness or other personal circumstances might have temporarily affected performance.

Where a temporary illness, a temporary injury or some other event outside of the student's control may have affected their performance in assessments which will be used to determine a grade, teachers will take this into account and document how they have done so. Special consideration cannot be applied due to lost teaching and learning. Schools must be satisfied that the issue or event

has had, or is reasonably likely to have had, a material effect on a student's ability to demonstrate his or her normal level of attainment in an assessment. Students will be reminded to raise any mitigating circumstances which warrant special consideration.

10) Malpractice

Centres/centre staff

Exam boards will investigate credible allegations of malpractice or issues reported from our monitoring processes that raise concerns about a failure to follow the published requirements for determining grades. Examples include:

- Exam entries are created for students who had not studied the course of entry or had not intended to enter for June 2021.
 - Grades created for students who have not been taught sufficient content to provide the basis for that grade.
 - A teacher deliberately and inappropriately disregarding the centre's published policy when determining grades.
 - A teacher fabricating evidence of candidate performance to support an inflated grade.
 - A teacher deliberately providing inappropriate levels of support before or during an assessment, including deliberate disclosure of mark schemes and assessment materials, to support an inflated grade.
 - A teacher intentionally submitting inflated grades.
 - A failure to retain evidence used in the determination of grades in accordance with the JCQ Grading guidance.
 - A systemic failure to follow the centre's policy in relation to the application of Access Arrangements or Special Consideration arrangements for students in relation to assessments used to determine grades.
 - A failure to take reasonable steps to authenticate student work.
 - A Head of Centre's failure to submit the required declaration when submitting their grades.
 - Grades being released to students (or their parents/carers) before the issue of results
 - Failure to cooperate with an awarding body's quality assurance, appeal or investigation processes.
 - Failure to conduct a centre review or submit an appeal when requested to do so by a student.
- Centres which identify such incidents should report them to the appropriate awarding organisation as normal, using the JCQM2 form.*

Students

Students are not permitted to attempt to influence their teachers' judgements about their grades. Neither should students attempt to gain an unfair advantage during the centre's process by, for example, submitting fabricated evidence or plagiarised work. Such incidents would constitute malpractice and the school is required to report any such instances to JCQ.

Students, or individuals acting on behalf of a student, such as parents/carers, are also prohibited to try and influence grade decisions by applying pressure on the school or their staff. Any such instances will be dealt with by the school internally, with clear and reliable records kept.

11) Results

- GCSE results will be released to centres on Wednesday 11 August 2021.
- GCSE students will receive their results on Thursday 12 August 2021.