

## FAQs students' GCSE, AS and A level exams and grades

Information and statements used to provide this guidance can be accessed via the links below additionally you may find this [video](#) helpful.

### [Guidance Documents](#)

[CONSULTATION Exceptional arrangements for exam grading and assessment in 2020](#)



### **What are all schools required to do to support examination boards in determining examination grades?**

*"Exam boards will ask exam centres to generate, for each subject, centre assessment grades for their students, and then to rank order the students within each of those grades".*

- a centre assessment grade for each student – [Ofqual's guidance states](#): "The centre assessment grades submitted to exam boards must reflect a fair, reasonable and carefully considered judgement of the most likely grade a student would have achieved if they had sat their exams this summer and completed any non-exam assessment."

- the rank order of students within each grade – for example, for all those students with a grade of 8 in GCSE mathematics a rank order where 1 is the most secure/highest attaining student, and so on. In other words, if 10 students are considered to have demonstrated 8 attainment in a GCSE subject, then these 10 students would have to be ranked 1-10, with the student at rank 1 being the most secure grade 8 and rank 10 being the least. The same process then takes place for each grade at GCSE, AS and A Level in every examination subject.

### **What will all schools be asked to submit?**

For each candidate in each subject, a centre assessment grade (see above for the definition) and their rank within each grade band.

### **Can there be tied ranks within grade bands?**

No. "Tied ranks (that is, giving two students position 1) will not be allowed".

### **What are the principles for determining the centre assessment grade and the rank order?**

*"The centre assessment grades submitted to exam boards must reflect a fair, reasonable and carefully considered judgement the most likely grade a student would have achieved if they had sat their exams this summer and completed any non-exam assessment".*

### **What will be taken into account by each department?**

The school will follow the guidance as set out by Ofqual:

*Teachers should draw on existing records and available evidence (as far as possible in the context of current public health advice). It is important that the judgements are objective, and they should only take account of evidence about student performance. This will include the following, where it is available.*

- records of each student's performance over the course of study, including for example progress review data (i.e. IPMs), classwork, bookwork (teacher assessment of exercise books or notes), and/or participation in performances in subjects such as music, drama and PE
- performance on any non-exam assessment (NEA), even if this has not been fully completed.
- for A level students who took AS in 2019, their AS results in that subject
- performance on any class or homework assessments and mock exams taken over the course of study
- previous results in your centre in this subject – these will vary according to a number of factors, including prior attainment of the students, but our data shows that for most centres any year-on-year variation in results for a given subject is normally quite small
- the performance of this year's students compared to those in previous years
- any other relevant information

**I haven't finished my NEA as the deadline was not until later in the term. Does this matter?**

Do not worry. All students are in the same position and this will not disadvantage you.

**Will my NEA be taken into consideration?**

Where this information is available for all candidates, yes.

**Do I need to bring / scan / send my files into school? Will I be required to submit work completed since the school closed?**

Do not worry, this is not required. We do not require any action on the part of any student.

**Will there be further assessments or tasks?**

We will not be asking you to complete any tasks or tests.

**Is there anything my child can do now to improve their centre assessment grade?**

No, the guidance is that *Teachers should draw on existing records and available evidence (as far as possible in the context of current public health advice)*. Whilst we are continuing to set work, the personal circumstances and ability to access resources varies from child to child and so it would be unfair to assess work completed whilst at home. Judgements will only consider evidence about student performance up to 20 March 2020, the date the school closed.

**I am worried that my mock result or IPM data were not as strong as I had hoped. Does this matter?**

Mock data and IPM data are just some of the pieces of information to be taken into consideration. We understand that students often perform less well in their mock examinations than they do in the final examination and IPM results can fluctuate. We will be taking holistic view and aim for a fair and reasonable judgment based all appropriate information (as mentioned in the response to What will be taken into account by each department?)

**Why doesn't the examination board just ask schools to submit UCAS predicted grades rather than ranking in this way?**

Ofqual has been clear that centre assessed grades are separate from predicted grades. We are required to rank each student within each grade to provide more granular information.

**Do schools have the final say on the grades awarded?**

No. *"So that the final grades awarded are as fair as possible, exam boards will standardise the judgements across different centres once they have been submitted, using a statistical methodology developed in conjunction with Ofqual"*.

**What will the exam boards use when deciding which grade to award to each candidate?**

1. *expected grade distributions at national level*
2. *results in previous years at individual centre level*
3. *the prior attainment profile of students at centre level*

Point 2 refers to the results profile of the school which can be found via this [link](#). Point 3 relates to KS2 data for GCSE students and Average Points Score (APS) at GCSE for A level. This is **not applied** at pupil level, but at centre (i.e. School) level.

**Will any work completed since School closure contribute to the centre grade?**

The answer is no. Ofqual Guidance states: *There is no requirement to set additional mock exams or homework tasks for the purposes of determining a centre assessment grade, and no student should be disadvantaged if they are unable to complete any work set after schools were closed. Where additional work has been completed after schools and colleges were closed on 20 March, Heads of Centre should exercise caution where that evidence suggests a change in performance. In many cases this is likely to reflect the circumstances and context in which the work is done.*

**What happens if a school is too generous, or too severe?**

*“If, when compared to the evidence above, your judgements are more generous than would be expected, then the final grades for some or all of your students will be adjusted down. On the other hand, if it appears that your judgements are more severe, then the final grades for some or all of your students will be adjusted up. We will do this to align the judgements across centres, so that, as far as possible, your students are not unfairly advantaged or disadvantaged this summer”.*

**We would have asked the school to apply for Special Consideration. Can we still do this?**

*“Special consideration, in the event that a student is unable to take an assessment or suffers a traumatic event that might affect their performance, will not apply this summer. Instead judgements should reflect how the students would have performed under ordinary circumstances. Where illness or other personal circumstances might have affected performance in mock exams, centres should bear that in mind when making their judgements”.* Records of illness and incident during the mock exams were maintained and these will be taken into consideration.

**My son was due to take a public examination in Year 10. Will he be awarded a grade by the examination board?**

This is uncertain. Ofqual has announced that Year 10 GCSE will be included in the process and receive centre assessment grades impacting our Year 10 RS cohort. However, there is an open consultation on this issue.

**When does the school have to submit this data? When will results be issued?**

Not earlier than the 29<sup>th</sup> May 2020, but the exact date is still to be finalised. Grade outcomes will be issued to students on the original planned on Thursday 13 August for A Level and AS Level and Thursday 20 August for GCSE; precise timings and what this process will look like at St Olave’s are to be confirmed.

**Can the school share with us what is being submitted to the examination boards?**

I am afraid the answer to that is no. Given that we are submitting *recommendations* rather than the final outcome, we are not permitted to share any of this information with you. *“Centres must not, under any circumstances, share the centre assessment grades nor the rank order of students with students, or their parents/carers or any other individuals outside the centre, before final results have been issued. This is to protect the integrity of teachers’ judgements, and to avoid teachers, heads of department, senior leaders or Heads of Centre being put under pressure by students and parents, to submit a grade that is not supported by the evidence. Since the final grades for some or all students in a centre could be different from those submitted, it also helps to manage students’ expectations”.*

**What if I am unhappy with the grade the exam board issues me with in the summer?**

*“Under the circumstances, the normal arrangements for reviews of marking and appeals will not apply. We are considering what arrangements might be put in place to allow an effective appeal and will consult on proposals shortly. Centres should expect the possible grounds of appeals to be relatively narrow and based on application of the process.*

*Students who feel that their grades from the summer do not reflect their ability will have the opportunity to take their exams in the autumn series or in summer 2021. If they choose to do this, both grades will stand”.*

**How can we be examined in the Autumn or Summer 2021 given that we did not finish the syllabus before schools closed?**

We do not have details yet of exactly how exam boards shall deal this, but all students across the country are in the same situation and we are sure that the closure of schools will be accounted for and no student will be disadvantaged.

**If I sit Autumn or Summer 2021 exams which result will count, the exams or the centre assessment grade?**

*Students who feel that their grades from the summer do not reflect their ability will have the opportunity to take their exams in the autumn series or in summer 2021. If they choose to do this, students will be able to use the higher of the two grades for future progression.*

**If I chose to take an exam this autumn will I still be able to go to university this year?**

*Students may still choose to take an exam even where their university or college place has been confirmed. However, it will take time for the results of these exams to be issued, so they will need to discuss with their higher and further education institution whether to start their course as planned or to delay their entry. Ofqual have asked organisations that represent higher and further education providers to consider how they might be flexible in admissions decisions, considering delays to entry to courses, for any students choosing to take an exam this autumn. They were reassured to hear that they believe that institutions will be flexible wherever possible, but we recognise this might only be possible in a minority of cases. Our advice is to contact your higher or further education institution when you receive your results in Autumn and discuss options. Further details of Autumn exams are expected to be released by Ofqual.*

**I am essentially a Year 14 student, having left last year and was due to re-sit exams at Saint Olave's this summer. What will happen with my grade?**

We are uncertain on this and are awaiting further guidance due no later than 30<sup>th</sup> April. We will update you in due course.

**What happens if the centre assessment grades do not meet my University offer?**

Students will be able to sit exams in the Autumn series or in Summer 2021. Universities are indicating that grades have to be confirmed by 31st August to take up places in 2020. Therefore, anyone aiming to take exams in Autumn would have to reapply for entry in 2021. We expect clarification on this from Ofqual.

**What requirements are there for quality assurance?**

Department sign-off

*Each set of centre assessment grades for a subject must be signed off by at least two teachers in that subject, one of whom should be the Head of Department (or where if there is only one teacher or only one is available, by the Head of Centre). Where a staff member might have a personal interest in a candidate (for example as a relative), Heads of Centre should make sure that additional controls are put in place, as appropriate. The Head of Centre being the Headteacher.*

Head of Centre sign-off

*The Head of Centre will be required to confirm that the centre assessment grades and the rank order of students are a true representation of student performance. If the Head of Centre is unavailable to do this, it may be delegated to a Deputy. In reviewing these centre assessment grades, the Head of Centre should consider how the distribution of centre assessment grades compares with grades achieved by the centre in previous years.*

**How are schools / colleges / universities going to use these grades?**

The Government intends normal admission policies to apply.

**When will we next hear from the school?**

Ofqual acknowledge that they are introducing these exceptional arrangements at speed and have launched a 14-day consultation which will close on Wednesday 29 April 2020. The consultation covers several areas including now allowing pupils in Year 10 to be given calculated grades, how the regulator should standardise grades, and how the appeals system should work. As information becomes available, we will share it with you, but you should not now expect to hear from us again in relation to the generation of centre grades / ranks.

**Can I have a say in the process?**

Yes, on the issues raised for consultation, the instructions on centre assessment grades is set. The consultation is open to anyone wishing to make a representation, including but not limited to parents, students and teachers. You can access the Ofqual consultation document via this [link](#) and details of how submit your views can be found on page 13 of the document.

**All of this is really worrying me. Who can help?**

These are unprecedented circumstances and we completely understand the worries felt by all students and parents. Whilst we can't share information we are sending to the exam boards with you, this does not mean we cannot support you more generally. We will continue to share all the information we received and keep you up to date on developments.