



## Methodist College Belfast Procedure for the Production of GCSE, AS and A Level Centre Assessment Grades and Rank Orders for the Award of External Examination Certificates 2020

With the cancellation of the summer 2020 exam series, the College has to produce a centre assessment grade and rank order within grades for each of our external exam candidates. This will be a holistic professional judgement, based on existing records and available evidence in school, to produce a grade that each student is **most likely to have achieved** if they had sat their exams and internally assessed components. Our aim is to ensure that no pupil is disadvantaged by the cancellation of the exams and that the qualifications they are awarded are a fair reflection of their academic abilities.

Please note that these centre assessment grades are not the same as:

- age related grades (usually defined as the grade a student would receive if they took the GCSE, AS or A level now)
- working at grades (the grade a student is currently working at)
- target grades (often set a little higher than likely to be achieved, to motivate students)
- predicted grades provided to UCAS in support of university applications

This process will take time and it will be carried out in a measured and considered way in order to ensure that we arrive at a fair submission for our pupils. It will be the exam boards, however, who determine the final grade awarded.

In making grade and rank judgements staff should:

- Follow the school protocol and departmental methodology;
- Use statistical information to **inform** judgements, but not to **make** judgements. Teachers know pupils better than Excel spreadsheets;
- Judge pupils against the national standard not the school standard;
- Not disadvantage pupils who have been unable to work since 20 March;
- Only consider evidence post 20 March if teachers are satisfied that it is bona fide and is consistent with what a candidate has previously produced;
- Take great care in disentangling clusters of broadly similar students in a rank order. Grade boundaries drawn through clusters are a potential source of unfairness in any exam process where marginal decisions can result in different grade outcomes;
- check for unconscious bias e.g. on gender, ethnicity grounds. This can be done statistically using historic centre data. The involvement of subject teachers, HoDs, pastoral and SLT in the decision making process for each pupil will address this.

Any conflicts of interest e.g. staff children, need to be documented. HoDs should inform the Head of Examinations of any such conflicts and record how they resolved the conflict. Members of staff should not be involved in any decision making where they are conflicted.

It is an essential requirement that the information about the Centre Assessment Grades and the Rank Orders remain confidential at **ALL** stages of the process. This requires that there is no discussion or disclosure of the grades and rank orders with any member of staff outside of departments, with parents, pupils or anyone else outside of the College.

We are not required to submit evidence, but we are required to keep a record of why pupils have been put in a particular position in the rank order. This document and the data and information recorded by departments as the process is carried out, will provide that evidence.

**The following is the step by step guide to the production of the required rank orders and Centre Assessment Grades to be used by all departments.**

1. Using the information on pages 4-6 of the guidance issued by CCEA (and the Ofqual equivalent), HoDs should decide which assessment evidence the department will use to calculate grades and a rank order for each of the pupils. This should be the most robust evidence available.

The following table provides examples of the type of evidence that should be considered.

Stage	Possible sources of evidence				
GCSE	F4 Winter exams	F4 Summer exams	F5 Winter exam	Controlled Assessment (fully or partially complete)	Other common assessments Practicals Performance pieces Orals
AS	GCSE result	L6 Winter exam	Common assessments	Coursework (fully or partially complete)	Practicals Performance pieces Orals
A2	GCSE results	AS results (UMS)	Winter exam	Coursework (fully or partially complete)	Other common assessments Practicals Performance pieces Orals

HoDs should make a COPY of the Departmental Markbook and then select in the COPY the relevant assessments that will be used to inform the allocation of grades and rank orders. Three additional columns need to be added, in the following order:

- Overall rank order
- Grade
- Rank order within the grade

The document will be used to assist with the production and recording of the outcomes of this process. It should be saved as (LEVEL)(SUBJECT)Centre Assessment Grades Record e.g. GCSE History Centre Assessment Grades Record.

2. Rank order each of these assessments separately.
3. Consider applying a weighting to the rank order of more recent assessment items (e.g. F5 Winter exam to count for double the F4 results) and/or to summative assessments which may best reflect a significant part of the specification to be assessed.

4. Calculate a single ranking from the average of these rankings. This is your **INITIAL RANK ORDER**. ***NB there can be no equal places. Any such submission will be rejected by the exam boards.***
5. Look at:
  - your historical data for the previous 3 years
  - subject teachers' estimated grades
  - typical improvement that an average pupil makes between their mock performance and their exams.
  - any known pastoral, medical or other circumstance that may have impacted on performance.
6. Allocate **PRELIMINARY GRADE BOUNDARIES**. If in doubt, err on the side of caution and award the higher of the two grades e.g. If you consider a pupil is high B low A, then allocate the A grade.
7. Compare the pupil's Preliminary Grade with their January assessment. If the Preliminary Grade is below that achieved in the January examination, ascertain if there is a justification for why this lower grade is the one that they would more likely have achieved in the summer exams. If there is no such justification, change the grade and hence ranking position to reflect higher grade which should now become the Preliminary Grade.
8. HoDs circulate to subject teachers the Initial Rank Order and the Preliminary Grades for each of their classes.
9. Subject teachers should consider this information using their knowledge of the academic performance and abilities of their pupils, to provide feedback to their HoD on the Initial Rank Order and the Preliminary Grades. Where a class is shared, then the teachers should communicate with each other to provide feedback to the HoD.

As a starting point, subject teachers may find it helpful to reflect on the preliminary grade allocation using a model similar to the one used by examining boards when establishing grade boundaries. In your professional opinion, have the pupils you teach

- who would **definitely** have achieved an **A\*** been assigned an **A\***;
- who would have had a **reasonable chance** of an **A\***, or moving from an **A** to an **A\***, been assigned a high **A** or an **A\***;
- who would **most probably** have achieved an **A**, been assigned an **A**;
- who would have had a **reasonable chance** of an **A** or moving from a **B** to an **A**, been assigned a high **B** or an **A**;
- Continue the process for **B**; **B/C**; **C**; **C/D**; **D**; **D/E**; **E**, including **B/C\*** for GCSE.

*You should bear in mind the changes in grading at GCSE in 2019, which resulted in fewer A\* grades being awarded, but with the same proportion of A\*/A grades as in previous years.*

This will help identify those pupils on the grade boundary interface, about whom further discussion is required and who may be moved as a result of further consideration of available evidence.

Reasons for the HoD adjusting the rank order include the following:

- Pastoral or medical reasons. Summary information will be circulated by the Pastoral Team to ensure that the circumstances of individual pupils are taken account of at this stage. The exam boards will **not** apply special considerations, so it is vital that we take account of any mitigating circumstances at this stage.
- The mock was inconsistent with prior performance (tracking data, assignments, class tests or homework – but only where there is reliable data for a consistent pattern of good work);

- The mock was inconsistent with subsequent performance, in cases where work has demonstrated a clear upward trajectory in the pupil's performance;
  - Performance in complete or incomplete coursework, practical work or controlled assessment – with the caveat that pupils often score more highly in these components than in written examinations
  - performance in other assignments or tests since the mock exam;
  - performance in re-sits (focusing on the mark **NOT** the grade);
  - likely performance in re-sits (*but please check which modules pupils have been entered for. You might have evidence of pupil progress in these components, as well as departmental data from previous years indicating an increase in scores for pupils who have re-taken modules*).
10. Based on the feedback and discussions with subject teachers, the HoD makes adjustments to the rank order, and then re-checks this against historical data. Where grades differ significantly from historical data they must be scrutinised carefully.
  11. Once the HoD has finalised these grades, if they are not content that they provide a fair reflection of what pupils would have been likely to achieve, there is scope for some further adjustment. However, the HoD will need to be able to justify this. This might be for one of the following reasons:
    - the cohort is weaker or stronger than in previous years, but you will need to be able to provide evidence (to SLT) in the form of average GCSE scores or baseline data, together with historical 'value-added' data;
    - the numbers of pupils taking your subject are so small that comparison with historical data is not appropriate, in which case you will also have to provide evidence for the comparative strength of this year's cohort.
  12. The **FINALISED GRADE ALLOCATION** and **RANK ORDER WITHIN THE GRADE** is recorded in the Subject Centre Assessment Grades Record. The HoD passes this information on to their SIT line manager. Note that this Finalised Rank Order has to be for each grade. For example, if you have 15 students for whom you have given a centre assessment grade of B, you should then rank them from 1 to 15, where 1 is the most secure/highest attaining, 2 is the next most secure and so on.
  13. SIT/SLT will then check the rank order and grade for each subject against historical data and any relevant pastoral or medical information. GCSE grades will be checked against CAT4 indicators.
  14. Any adjustment to the rank order will be made in consultation with the HoD.
  15. The **GRADE ALLOCATION AND RANK ORDER FOR SUBMISSION** for each subject will be signed off, recorded and submitted in line with the system requirements of each exam board by the Head of Centre (the Principal)

## OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

### Upper 6<sup>th</sup> AS Resit Candidates CCEA

If a student is resitting a complete AS (i.e. all modules) you will need to provide a grade for that AS and include it in the ranking with the Lower 6<sup>th</sup> candidates.

If the candidate is only resitting part of an AS (e.g. one module) you do not need to provide a predicted grade for that module. You will then be providing a predicted grade for the candidate's A2, taking into consideration their intention to resit part of the AS.

### **Upper 6<sup>th</sup> taking an A Level in 1 Year**

For an Upper 6<sup>th</sup> pupil sitting an A level exam in one year, a grade for the AS must be included in the ranking for the Lower 6<sup>th</sup> candidates as well as a grade and ranking with the other Upper 6<sup>th</sup> candidates.

### **Lower 6<sup>th</sup> Further Maths Candidates**

These pupils have the option to accept the Maths grade awarded by this process or to sit the external exam at the end of U6 in the summer of 2021. These pupils will be contacted by a Vice Principal to discuss their options and to ensure they choose what is best for them.

### **Early sitters**

4<sup>th</sup> Form RE and LLW exams will taken in the Summer 2021. Pupils in 4<sup>th</sup> Form and below, who had enrolled to sit additional qualifications, will not be included in this process. Their examination presentation will be deferred until the summer 2021 series of exams.

### **MCB Students presenting at another Centre**

It will be for the external presenting centre to determine the grade for such candidates. If contacted, the College will liaise with the appropriate member of staff at the external presenting centre to provide any relevant information.

### **Private Candidates**

These will be dealt with in line with the guidance issued by the relevant exam board. The College will only submit a grade for a private candidate if we have sufficient evidence of the student's achievement to make an objective judgement.

### **CCEA**

Private candidates are students who have not been taught in the centre because they might be home-schooled or be following distance-learning programmes or studying independently.

Where centres have accepted entries from private candidates, those students should be included where the Head of Centre is confident that they and their staff have seen sufficient evidence of the student's achievement to make an objective judgement.

We are urgently exploring whether there are alternative options for those students who do not have an existing relationship with a centre and who need results this summer for progression purposes.

The Head of Centre should communicate their decision to any private candidates and take advice from CCEA awarding organisation where cases are not straightforward. It will be important for centres to make sure that their entries are complete and accurate, as grades will only be issued for those students who have been entered.

### **Ofqual**

Where centres have accepted entries from private candidates (students who they have not taught themselves, because they have been home-schooled, are following distance-learning programmes or studying independently) those students should be included where the Head of Centre is confident that they and their staff have seen sufficient evidence of the student's achievement to make an objective judgement.

We are urgently exploring whether there are alternative options for those students who do not have an existing relationship with a centre and who need results this summer for progression purposes.

Unfortunately, this is unlikely to be possible for all private candidates, some of whom may instead need to take exams in the autumn to get their grades. We appreciate that this is a matter of real concern to private candidates and will provide an update as soon as possible.

Centres should submit centre assessment grades for all students for whom they are confident that they can make a judgement. This will be a decision for the Head of Centre. The Head of Centre should communicate their decision to any private candidates and take advice from their exam board where cases are not straightforward. It will be important for centres to make sure that their entries are complete and accurate as grades will only be issued for those students who have been entered.

### **Record keeping, Confidentiality and Appeals**

Remember, all grading and ranking decisions have to be kept confidential during the April to August assessment and awarding period. After the publication of grades in August, the exam boards will run an appeals process. At this time, it is likely that pupils will be able to make subject access requests for grade/rank information. It is therefore essential that at all stages of this process you keep thorough, objective and professional records.

### **Sources of information and Guidance**

CCEA

[https://ccea.org.uk/downloads/docs/ccea-asset/Examinations/Guidance%20document%20for%20Heads%20of%20Centres\\_4.pdf](https://ccea.org.uk/downloads/docs/ccea-asset/Examinations/Guidance%20document%20for%20Heads%20of%20Centres_4.pdf)

[https://ccea.org.uk/downloads/docs/ccea-asset/Examinations/Guidance%20document%20for%20Student%2C%20Parents%20and%20Teachers\\_4.pdf](https://ccea.org.uk/downloads/docs/ccea-asset/Examinations/Guidance%20document%20for%20Student%2C%20Parents%20and%20Teachers_4.pdf)

Ofqual:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/awarding-qualifications-in-summer-2020>

Qualifications Wales:

<https://www.qualificationswales.org/english/coronavirus---covid-19/information-for-centres>