



Loughborough Amherst school

Policy on the awarding of Centre Assessment Grades, summer 2020

This document has been written to provide guidance and JCQ Exam Centre protocols for all teachers teaching Loughborough Amherst School pupils who are entered for external exam entries for GCSE, iGCSE and A Level in the summer exam series of 2020. We wait for further information on the awarding of vocational qualifications and these qualifications will be awarded with awareness of but as a distinct enterprise from this Policy.

Absolutely finalised guidance from Ofqual, exam boards and indeed the United Kingdom Government will only be issued towards the middle of May 2020. This document can be refreshed as required to incorporate any binding decisions on us as a JCQ Exam Centre.

This document is made available and kept on the LAS website to allow update of this document as required. Please always check the website for the latest document available.

Background

Due to COVID-19, the United Kingdom Government announced in March 2020 that external exams would not be sat in English schools in the summer exam series of 2020. In their place JCQ Exam Centres (LAS) would award Centre Assessment Grades as recommendations to the exam boards in place of exams being physically taken as normal. In addition to Ofqual, this document incorporates guidance from JCQ.

Ofqual (the government regulator for exams) and JCQ (the umbrella body representing exam boards in their administration of domestic exams) are working together and guiding schools in the principles and frameworks we are to work within and will do so in the months to come. There are some areas where Ofqual and exam boards are still working to provide definitive guidance to schools and this will only be fully delivered to us in May 2020: LAS thus reserve the right to update this Policy in line with future recommendations, up to and including the date of external exam grade entries.

To quote directly from Ofqual's website communication of Friday 3 April 2020, grades offered:

... should be fair, objective and carefully considered judgements of the grades schools and colleges believe their students would have been most likely to achieve if they had sat their exams, and should take into account the full range of available evidence.

The Chief Regulator of Ofqual, in writing directly to pupils, their parents and guardians also offered the following guidance on the awarding of grades, in that in making their decisions teachers will award:

... the grade they believe you were most likely to get if teaching, learning and exams had happened as planned.

The guides for Heads of Centres and teachers describes this as:

... the most likely grade a student would have achieved if they had sat their exams this summer and completed any non-exam assessment.

Teachers are being asked to offer Centre Assessment Grades to exam boards, much like normal coursework would have been suggested to exam boards for their final endorsement. From that, exam boards have three options: moderate grades up, if it is felt that schools have been unduly harsh in their Centre Assessment Grades; accept the Centre Assessment Grades as offered by the school; moderate the grades down if the exam boards feel that the school has been overly generous.

It is important to note that each exam board will moderate each subject, and that Ofqual will also monitor overall school performance.

Some key principles in the awarding of Centre Assessment Grades are as follows, as outlined in various communications from Ofqual, JCQ and exam boards

- Grades awarded should be grounded in evidence – they are not wildly optimistic UCAS Predicted Grades, but the most likely attainment of a pupil
- Although not submitted for this year, performance in NEA, coursework etc. should be reflected in the overall grades we offer
- We award the grades based on our professional judgement with the evidence at hand. These are not negotiated with parents or pupils
- Pupils and parents are not to be told the submitted grades: this is different therefore to coursework practice in the past
- We will apply Access Arrangements and special considerations, as per JCQ guidance, as part of our awarding of Centre Assessment Grades
- Grades will not be awarded any later than normal (13 August 2020 for AS and A Levels and 20 August 2020 for GCSE and IGCSEs)
- If a pupil were unhappy with a grade offered, they can then take the external exam at some point in the future if they feel the grade awarded was not reflective of their ability level or aspiration
- Ofqual and JCQ are going to be forensic in their data analysis to ensure attainment is in line with historic trends for schools and individual subject departments and likely achievement per pupil
- It is important to remember that as a JCQ Exam Centre we need to uphold exam rules and regulations.
- Failure to do so could see us lose our right to be an Exam Centre.

Evidence that Ofqual deem appropriate to guide Centre Assessment Grades

To quote directly from Ofqual's announcement of Friday 3 April 2020, schools must provide:

... a centre assessment grade for every student in each of their subjects: that is, the grade they would be most likely to have achieved if they had sat their exams and completed any non-exam assessment. Judgements should balance different sources of evidence such as:

- *classwork*
- *bookwork*
- *any participation in performances in subjects such as music, drama or PE*
- *any non-exam assessment – whether or not complete*
- *the results of any assignments or mock exams*
- *previous examination results – for example, for any re-sitting students or those with relevant AS qualifications*
- *any other records of student performance over the course of study*

In determining the final Centre Assessment Grades, the Ofqual guidance to Heads of Centre is apt, in that the grades should provide a:

... holistic professional judgement, balancing the different sources of evidence

The question of further submitted work since the announcement that external exams would not take place

As general practice, we are not considering work submitted since 20 March 2020 for the consideration of Centre Assessment Grades. From this date forward we are also not holding further internal assessment weeks or further exam papers explicitly offered to support the formulation of Centre Assessment Grades.

This is because:

- The Chief Regulator of Ofqual, Sally Collier, is not encouraging this as practice as it could disadvantage some pupils unable to do this.
- Ofqual and JCQ guidance states that we should be extremely cautious in accepting any work submitted since Friday 20 March and there is no need to do so, as the ability to authenticate this work as well as the modus operandi of exams this year fundamentally changed on this date of school closures in England.
- There are issues with authentication of work. The AQA exam board have raised this as a potential breach of exam guidance, in that we cannot be sure that the work submitted is that of the pupil. Work submitted since then – once it was clear examinations were not taking place and teachers would be awarding grades – could be the work of many other people, including associates, family members or even professionals employed to complete the work.
- This avoids pupils, staff and parents / guardians endangering their Health and Safety at a moment of national crisis. All stakeholders should not be putting any more pressure on their health and wellbeing at this time.
- This avoids the difficulty of what would warrant a satisfactory sample size of work submitted to teachers for assessment from 20 March onwards to see a grade uplifted. Our reporting data sets are based upon many input points and across many months of work. Trying to quantify how many further pieces would be enough to overturn this significant data set is an impossible task at this moment in time.
- It avoids an unfair disadvantage being applied to pupils who might not be able to set work through ill-health to them or their family, or indeed through the luck of whether their teachers were ill or not at that moment in time too. It would be grossly unfair for the benefit of uplift in grades to only apply to those fortunate enough to have not fallen ill, when we are experiencing an international health pandemic.
- This provides clarity and closure to assessment for Centre Assessment Grades for all stakeholders, maintaining our integrity as an Exam Centre, regulated by JCQ.
- This allows us to evidence how we awarded grades, before potential manipulation might have emerged from Monday 23 March onwards with some maybe trying to exploit the system.

The LAS system of evidence to be used in the awarding of Centre Assessment Grades (subject to Ofqual, JCQ or Government change at any time)

Where available, the following data sets will be used to inform Centre Assessment Grades:

Year 11:

- CEM MidYIS GCSE predicted grades data – to inform, but not directly prescribe Centre Assessment Grades
- Year 10 Internal summer exam grades
- Year 11 Autumn Mock Exam grades
- Year 11 Spring Mock Exam grades
- Result(s) from any other significant formal assessments
- Final Centre Assessment Grade, incorporating likely performance in coursework, NEA and controlled assessment, as well as ‘the curve of progress during the course’.

Year 13:

- CEM ALIS A Level predicted grades data – to inform, but not directly prescribe Centre Assessment Grades
- Year 12 Internal summer exam grades
- January Mock Exam grades

- Result(s) from any other significant formal assessments
- Final Centre Assessment Grade, incorporating likely performance in coursework, NEA and controlled assessment, as well as 'the curve of progress during the course'.

The LAS process of awarding Centre Assessment Grades to pupils in Year 11 and 13 undertaking GCSE, IGCSE, and A Level exams in the summer of 2020, undertaken in May 2020 for external submissions to exam boards.

1. Departments are encouraged to appropriately consider guidance offered at a subject-specific level and anything particularly applicable to their own exam board requirements in the awarding of Centre Assessment Grades.
2. Departments begin with the Mock Examination Grades for Year 11 and Year 13 as a starting point for the Centre Assessment Grade offered. This is the latest data set we have, offered before government lockdowns were introduced and before the announcement of the cancellation of summer external exams in England. They are cumulative and honest and were unblemished by the knowledge teachers would be offering Centre Assessment Grades as they were submitted before these announcements.
3. Departments consider other data sets such as coursework or NEA work that was yet to be marked and other such valuable and legitimate results, as encouraged by Ofqual and JCQ. They then consider the curve of progress from Autumn 2018 through to Spring 2020.
4. Departments – with teachers and Heads of Department working together – then offer the '1st Proposed Grade'.
5. These grades are entered at the correct level of 1-5 for foundation GCSE and 5-9 for higher level GCSE papers, dependent on what paper a pupil was entered for. There is no ability to achieve above the paper for which a pupil was entered – i.e. foundation level entries are a maximum award of a 5.
6. For each pupil, teachers award the final Centre Assessment Grade in considering any significant pastoral concerns that might have impacted performance to date which might have seen a pupil underperform so far in academic data reporting. To support this, the JCQ guidance on the special consideration process is applied before we submit our Centre Assessment Grades. This documentation is very time-specific and applies very high thresholds, in limiting the time windows and events that can be considered in affecting performance in assessments. This guidance was constructed with timetabled exams on set days in mind, not retrospectively examining academic performance across a course and thus of course is therefore a guide for us and not a rigid application as it is for exams normally. With all that in mind, the following principles from this documentation will guide our considerations for special considerations:
 - (That the concern)... has had, or is reasonably likely to have had, a material effect on a candidate's ability to take an assessment or demonstrate his or her normal level of attainment in an assessment.
 - Special consideration can only seek to go some way to assist a candidate affected by a potentially wide range of difficulties, emotional or physical, which may influence performance in examinations. It cannot remove the difficulty faced by the candidate.
 - Only minor adjustments can be made to the mark awarded because to do more than this would jeopardize the standard of the examination.
 - All examinations are measuring what a candidate knows and can do. The overall grades awarded must reflect the level of attainment demonstrated in the examination(s). The grades awarded do not necessarily reflect the candidate's true level of ability if attainment has been considerably affected over a long period of time. Where long term circumstances have prevented the candidate from reaching the competence standards it may not be possible to make an adjustment.
 - Special consideration cannot be applied in a cumulative fashion. For example, on the basis of a domestic crisis at the time of the examination and the candidate suffering from a viral illness.

The following are all examples that would be considered for special consideration under JCQ guidance:

- a. Terminal illness
- b. Death
- c. A very serious crisis / disruptive event
- d. Major surgery
- e. Severe illness or injury

Timeframes are important. JCQ guidance allows dispensation to be applied for events occurring at the time of the assessment (i.e. on the day of an exam) or 'very recent' events before an external exam of up to one month for the highest category of dispensation of 5% of marks achieved in an exam. As we have no fixed exam dates to work with, this is unworkable for our application. Their second timeframe is 'recent' – being up to four months before an exam. For the sake of this policy, the impact of 'recent' events will be limited to the period 20 November 2019 to 20 March 2020 inclusive, the day of school closures in England.

Knowledge of significant pastoral concerns will be included in our data sets when already known, with pupils and parents able to make new submissions for consideration as part of this process too. A submission by pupils and parents or already-known knowledge about pastoral concerns does not automatically mean a dispensation will be applied, and / or that if a dispensation is applied that that will result in a different grade being offered for the Centre Assessment Grade. For clarity again, the maximum allowance as part of the special consideration process awarded by JCQ in the highest bracket of 'most exceptional cases' is 5% of marks; most cases fall into the 'more common category' of consideration which attracts a 3% dispensation. We are awarding grades, not marks, and so an uplift in grades would only be applied to those on the borderline between grades under this guidance.

7. For each pupil, teachers award the Centre Assessment Grade in considering any SEND needs and Access Arrangements that might have impacted performance to date which might have seen a pupil underperform so far in data reporting but would have seen a pupil likely perform better in the actual exams. This will be applied as part of our process in awarding Centre Assessment Grades. As an example, having a SEND where reasonable adjustment had been applied throughout a course of study and that reasonable adjustment was already reflected in a pupil's academic reporting data would not mean a pupil's grade was upgraded. However, if an SEND was recently diagnosed, a pupil were to undertake their exams in a separate room or that a reader or scribe would have been provided for external exams but that maybe was not always applicable within the grounds of reasonable adjustment in our day-to-day operation as a school, these would be worthy of consideration. This data will be included as appropriate in our data sets in consultation with the Head of Academic Support.

8. Once departments have formulated their grades, the Head of Department should analyse their overall department averages to ensure they are in line with historic performance. It is absolutely right that some departments will see a dip in performance this year and some will see increases too: variety of performance is completely natural in any year. We accept as a school that not all departments should see enhanced achievement this year. Departments should be analysing Centre Assessment Grades against their historic performance as a department and subject, not against other departments in the school.

9. If there is massive statistical variation that cannot be explained in comparison to previous external exam results, the Head of Department might decide to revisit the grades awarded to the cohort.

10. Once departments are satisfied with their awarding of grades, a rank order of candidates in that subject must be compiled for submission to the exam boards. This is to ensure that any moderation upwards or downwards is proportionately done: if the exam boards only had B grades submitted for all candidates in a year but the exam board disagreed with our awarding of all B grades, they would have no way to provide reasonable statistical adjustment at a granular level. With this ranking, they can. It is crucial that this ranking is accurate, honest and

supported by whole-department data wherever possible, whilst still accepting some place for teacher verbal validation and discretion.

11. For the rank ordering of pupils, it must occur at subject – not class – level. There must be an absolute progression through the year: joint placings are not permitted (as in joint first). Pupils must be listed 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 etc.

12. Once the 1st proposed grades are complete, the school SLT will review undertake a review of each subject with the Head of Department and will seek further explanation where doubt is raised about the awarding of a grade. Analysis will be given to whole-school as well as departmental attainment in comparison to previous cohorts as part of this process and any required adjustments will be made. These will then form the 'Final Grade and Ranking'.

13. We must be clear that the internally-awarded grades can still be moderated by the exam boards. So in essence the grade we offer is like a coursework mark: it's our recommendation, but not a guarantee and it cannot be changed upwards or downwards.

14. We aim to have finalised our processes and have internally-awarded our grades completely by Monday 1 June 2020. This will allow us plenty of time to safely upload grades to meet the examination board deadlines.

15. Within each department, two members of staff must sign-off on the Centre Assessment Grades as submitted to exam boards. Where this is not possible, the Head of Centre can second submissions.

16. Where there is a conflict of interest – where a teacher might have a personal interest in the awarding of grades within their influence – that teacher must inform their Head of Department. The Head of Department must then provide management of that situation, to ensure no undue influence is gained.

17. The Head of Department should consult the Head Teacher or Deputy Head Academic if they have any doubt whatsoever about the ways to safely manage a situation with a potential conflict of interest within their department in the awarding and ranking of grades.

18. Teachers are not permitted to reveal Centre Assessment Grades beyond the required professional discussions and actions necessary and must take care in the handling of such data in a remote working environment.

19. The Head of Centre (Dr Julian Murphy) will provide a declaration with our submissions that both the grades awarded and the ranking are a fair representation. We are not required to provide our data sets in submission, but will keep them on record if required for future inspection.

20. The Centre declaration – as prescribed by Ofqual – is as follows:

I confirm that these centre assessment grades, and the rank order of students are accurate and represent the professional judgements made by my staff, and that entries were appropriate for each candidate. Having reviewed the relevant processes and data, I am confident that they honestly and fairly represent the grades that these students would have been most likely to achieve if they had sat their exams as planned, and that they have not been disclosed to either the candidate or their parent/guardian. I understand that exam boards will conduct a statistical standardisation exercise, using a model developed with Ofqual, and that, if the profile of grades submitted is substantially different from what might be expected based on my centre's historic results and the prior attainment of this year's students, the grades for my centre will be adjusted to bring them into line with national standards.

21. Failure to administrate our Centre Assessment Grades as in the point above may constitute Exam Centre malpractice.

22. This Policy will be advertised to all stakeholders affected by this Policy.

23. Candidates may be permitted to challenge the process – but not the result – of the grades that will be awarded, as per the Secretary of State for Education’s letter of 31 March 2020 to Sally Collier, Chief Regulator of Ofqual. To quote Mr Williamson’s letter:

It is important that students should have access to a right of appeal if they believe the process was not followed correctly in their case. Ofqual should therefore develop such an appeal process, focused on whether the process used the right data and was correctly applied, rather than seeking to overturn teachers’ professional judgement on individual students’ ability.

As of Wednesday 29 April, the positioning of Ofqual is that pupils are unable to challenge the professional judgement of teachers in awarding grades or the formulation of this Policy (which in itself is not required by Ofqual). Pupils might be able to challenge the application of this Policy when Ofqual publish further information in May, but only after the Centre Assessment Grades have been awarded by exam boards in August.

24. Personal data held about pupils is usually available via request under GDPR laws, but this is not permissible in these circumstances in relation to the awarding of Centre Assessment Grades. To quote directly from Ofqual’s Guidance to Centres: *‘However, in respect of personal data such as marks or other information processed by a Data Controller for the purposes of determining results, an exemption from disclosure exists under paragraph 25(2) of the Data Protection Act. This allows Data Controllers (in this case centres) to delay disclosure of such information until after results have been issued.’*

25. Private candidates – that is pupils who are currently not pupils of Loughborough Amherst School – will only have Centre Assessment Grades provided if we are confident of our ability to provide an evidenced and reasoned Centre Assessment Grade. At this time, our Foundation position is that we are not accepting private candidates for entries this summer. This will be at the ultimate discretion of the Head of Centre, pending further communications from Ofqual and JCQ. If private candidates are not able to be awarded Centre Assessment Grades due to a lack of relevant evidence, private candidates are encouraged to sit the external exam series when they are offered.

30. This Policy applies to Loughborough Amherst School only: Loughborough Grammar School and Loughborough High School are separate JCQ Exam Centres and are absolutely right to formulate their own policies or practices as independent JCQ Exam Centres, even if being part of the Loughborough Schools Foundation overall with Loughborough Amherst School, Fairfield Prep School and the Nursery.

31. Candidates who do not feel their awarded grade reflects their desired outcome are able to sit the external exam series at the next offering: this might be in autumn 2020, or summer 2021. In this situation, both grades will stand as evidence of student achievement (i.e. the summer 2020 exam grade will still be valid, if a later subsequent external exam entry were to produce a lower grade than the Centre Assessment Grade that was already awarded).