



12 May 2020

**Procedure on the awarding of Centre Assessment Grades, Summer 2020**

Dear parents,

I wrote to you three weeks ago to explain the Foundation's approach to the award of Centre Assessment Grades.

We have since developed a comprehensive procedure to ensure that subject teachers and their Heads of Department apply a consistent and fair approach to how grades are determined for each student. This is a document that is designed to guide the actions of all teachers who have taught Grammar School boys who are entered for GCSE, IGCSE, AS and A Level in the Summer 2020 examination series. It is therefore very detailed. Nevertheless, I hope that it will allow any parent with concerns about their son's likely achievement to understand our procedures.

We still await information from Ofqual about the appeals process, and I had been waiting for this before writing. However, details are yet to be published and I feel that I need to bring our procedure to your attention at this point. The full document will be posted on the 'Academic' pages of the Grammar School website and will be updated as finalised guidance is published.

**Duncan Byrne**  
**Headmaster**  
**Loughborough Grammar School**

## **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 (LGS) 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, Cambridge CIE and Edexcel – the latter two being exam providers who offer some of our IGCSEs - which in almost all ways mirrors the guidance provided by Ofqual for all exams in England offered by domestic exam boards.

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: LGS thus reserves 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 more objective than the predictions made for UCAS, which always err on the side of optimism. The Centre Assessment Grades must represent the most likely attainment of a student.
- Performance in coursework and other non-examined assessment should be reflected in the overall grades we offer.
- We are not allowed to inform pupils or their parents of the centre assessed grades. This is different therefore to coursework practice in the past.
- Following JCQ guidance, schools must take boys' Access Arrangements into account (for a learning need or disability) as part of our process in awarding Centre Assessment Grades. In addition, we will apply any Special Consideration in the case of pupils where injury, illness or other indisposition has affected prior attainment. Further details can be found below.
- Grades will be awarded on 13 August 2020 for AS and A Levels and 20 August 2020 for GCSE and IGCSEs.
- If a student is unhappy with a grade offered, he can then take the external exam at some point in the future if he feels the grade awarded was not reflective of his 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 deems 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

## **Why the Schools will not accept work submitted since the announcement cancelling exams**

We are not considering any work submitted since 20 March 2020 for the award of Centre Assessment Grades. We are aware that some other schools have taken a different view. However, our decision is based on Ofqual and JCQ guidance, which states that Centres should be extremely cautious in accepting any work submitted since Friday 20 March, as the ability to authenticate this work is limited:

*“Heads of Centre should exercise caution where ... evidence suggests a change in performance. In many cases, this is likely to reflect the circumstances and context in which the work is one.”*

## **How we will apply Special Consideration and adjustments for Access Arrangements**

For each student, teachers award the final Centre Assessment Grade having considered any significant pastoral concerns that might have led to underperformance to date. To support this, we will apply the JCQ guidance on the special consideration process 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 would usually be for exams. 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 of events that would be considered for special consideration under JCQ guidance:

- Terminal illness
- Death of a member of immediate family
- A very serious crisis / disruptive event
- Major surgery
- 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 current academic year.

We already have knowledge of significant pastoral concerns, and the Heads of Year 11 and Sixth Form have already consulted with me and Heads of Department to identify those we believe should be included as cases for 'special consideration'. Boys and parents are nevertheless able to make new submissions for consideration as part of this process. A submission by boys / 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 this 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.

If boys or parents would like to make representations for special consideration in our awarding of Centre Assessment Grades, they should please contact Mrs Kiran Rajput (Headmaster's PA) by 9am on Friday 22 May with details of the significant impairment as above. Supporting documentation is not needed at this point but might be requested if required.

## **Access Arrangements**

For each boy, teachers award the final Centre Assessment Grade in considering any SEND needs and Access Arrangements that might have caused a boy to underperform at one or more of the grading points (identified on page 6), but would have seen him 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 an SEND where reasonable adjustment had been applied throughout a course of study and that reasonable adjustment was already reflected in a boy's academic reporting data would not mean he would benefit from upgrading. However, if an SEND was recently diagnosed, and Access Arrangements only recently confirmed, this situation would be worthy of consideration. This data will be included as appropriate in consultation with the Head of Learning Support.

## Step by step procedure for awarding of Centre Assessment Grades: Summer 2020

Guidance for subject teachers, Heads of Department and senior leaders.

- 1) Coursework and classwork:** Subject teachers, guided by their HoD, will determine: (a) a grade for performance in non-exam assessment (where applicable); and (b) a grade based on classwork, homework and internal tests produced during the current school year until 20 March 2020. *The latter must be based on evidence in teachers' mark books and does **not** take into account assessments such as Mock exams which are considered separately. Both of this grades will be entered via the SIMS database by 1 May to ensure that a permanent record is made.*
- 2) Special consideration:** Special consideration will be given at this stage to any serious medical or pastoral concern that might have adversely affected the performance of a student to date. Heads of Y11 & Y13 will meet with the Deputy Head Pastoral to determine where such a concern should be reflected in a pupil's ranking being raised. The threshold is the definition of a disability as outlined in UK law: in other words, the pastoral concern must be 'substantial' and long-term in nature. Further guidance can be found elsewhere in this document.
- 3) Pastoral special consideration:** The Deputy Head Pastoral and Headmaster will create a list of students who are deemed to qualify for special consideration under the above. This information will be shared with relevant Heads of Department (HoDs) by the end of April. Boys and parents will nevertheless be permitted to submit further information for special consideration up until Friday 22 May.
- 4) Evidence to be considered:** Before awarding the final Teacher Centre Assessment Grade (TCAG), teachers and HoDs should consider the following evidence:

Year 11	Year 13
	GCSE results in relevant subjects
Baseline prediction from Year 9 (MidYIS test)	Baseline prediction from Year 12 (ALIS test)
Year 10 end of year exam grade	Year 12 end of year exam grade
Attainment grade December 2019	Attainment grade December 2019
Mock exam grade January 2020	Mock exam grade January 2020
Achievement in coursework (where applicable)	Achievement in coursework (where applicable)
Performance during Y11 (classwork, homework, tests)	Performance during Y13 (classwork, homework, tests)

A spreadsheet of this data will be provided for senior leaders to facilitate the checking of judgements.

- 5) TCAG:** Departments – with teachers and Heads of Department working together – enter their draft Teacher Centre Assessment Grade (TCAG) onto SIMS. **Deadline: Friday 1 May 2020.**
- 6) TCAG vs. mock:** If the TCAG is below that of the January Mock examination, an explanation must be provided by the Head of Department to the Deputy Head Academic (DHA).
- 7) TCAG & SEND:** For each pupil, teachers award the TCAG having considered any SEND needs and Access Arrangements that might have impacted performance to date BUT would have seen him in all probability perform better in the actual exams.

- 8) Historic performance:** HoDs must, prior to submission to the DHA, ensure that the overall grade distribution makes reference to the historic performance of students in that subject.
- 9) Grade distribution analysis:** Once departments have submitted their grades, the DHA will analyse the overall grade distribution to ensure it is in line with the school's historic performance. It is accepted that the performance of a subject will differ from year to year depending on the strength of its cohort. The overall distribution of grades will reflect the strength of the particular cohort, as evidenced by MidYIS/ALIS scores and GCSE achievement (in the case of Year 13 students).
- 10) Rank order:** Once the Headmaster and DHA are satisfied with the departmental distribution of grades, a rank order of pupils must be compiled by the head of each department in conjunction with class teachers for submission to the exam boards. This must occur at whole subject level. Joint placings are not permitted: pupils must be listed 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 etc. **Deadline: Monday 18 May 2020**
- 11) Sign off:** Within each department, two members of staff must sign-off on the centre assessed grades as stipulated by JCQ. In a single teacher department, the DHA will fulfil this role.
- 12) Learning support sign off:** The Head of Learning Support and the Heads of Year 11 and Sixth Form will review the final TCAG. Adjustment is still possible at this stage, in consultation with the HoD.
- 13) SLT review:** Once data sets are provisionally complete, the DHA and Headmaster will review every grade awarded and will seek further explanation where doubt is raised about the awarding of a grade.
- 14) Internal final deadline:** We aim to have finalized our processes and have internally-awarded our grades completely by 29/5/2020. Grades will be submitted to examination boards from Monday 1 June.
- 15) Conflicts of interest:** Where there is a conflict of interest, i.e. a teacher's son may be included in the exam cohort, that teacher must inform their HoD. The HoD must then provide management of that situation, to ensure no undue influence is gained. The HoD should consult the Deputy Head Academic if in any doubt about how to manage a situation with a potential conflict of interest.
- 16) Misconduct:** Any attempt by a teacher with children attending LGS to place teachers under any pressure in the awarding of grades would be viewed as potential gross misconduct.
- 17) Confidentiality:** No member of staff is permitted to reveal centre assessment grades or rankings to any pupil or parent.
- 18) School declaration:** The Headmaster (as Head of Centre) will provide the required Ofqual declaration that both the grades awarded and the ranking are a fair representation. We will retain evidence of the process whereby grades have been awarded if required for appeal or future inspection.
- 19) Appeal:** Details of any appeal process have yet to be published by Ofqual, but will be added here when finalized.
- 20) Private candidates:** We lack the detailed evidence to be able to assign a TCAG to private candidates. Therefore, private candidates are encouraged to sit the external exam series when they are offered.
- 21) Governor approval:** This procedure has been approved by the Chair of the LGS Board of Governors.