

Assessing Student Grades



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Introduction

- The criteria for assessment
- The evidence base
- Timing
- Non exam assessment
- Private candidates
- Quality assurance

The criteria

- Proposal that grade should be “based on teachers’ assessments of the standard at which their students are performing, and that the grade should indicate the student’s demonstrated knowledge, understanding and skill” met with support.
- Ofqual decided “teachers should make a holistic judgment of each student’s performance on a range of evidence relating to the subject content that has been delivered by their teacher”. Ofqual and exam boards “will provide more advice about the range of evidence that centres will be able to use to support their teachers’ judgments”.

The criteria

- Assessment only on what content has been delivered to students by teachers (subject to confirmation from Head of Centre that students have been taught sufficient content to allow progression to the next stage of education).
- Exam boards will provide a package of materials, including questions and mark schemes to assist teachers, although use is not compulsory.
- Overall, it will be no easier or harder for a student to achieve a particular grade this year compared to previous years.

The criteria

- What is a fair grade? Perspective of:
 - Student
 - School
 - National level
- “Centres will also be encouraged, as part of their overall quality assurance, to consider the grades for this year’s cohort compared to cohorts from previous years when exams have taken place, to make sure they have not been overly lenient or harsh in their assessment of the 2021 cohort. “

The criteria: analysis

- Provides a large amount of discretion for schools.
- Does not appear to account for disparities in effect of pandemic.
- Approach explicitly “as far as we can go to take account of the disruption caused by the pandemic, but without breaking the link between students’ attainment and the grade they receive. This link is important if grades issued in 2021 are to be meaningful for those who use them for selection”

The evidence

- Evidence throughout the course can be used.
- Should use a “broad range of evidence”.
- Use of materials provided by the exam board (although optional).

Timing

- Assessment should be as late in the academic year as practicable to enable teaching to continue for as long as possible.
- There is no set window for assessment.

Non-exam assessment

- Marked by teachers and contribute to the overall grade.
- Partially completed NEA will be taken into account. Exam boards will provide guidance on situation where insufficient NEA completed to provide meaningful evidence.
- No moderation of NEA marking.

Private candidates

- Students should work with a centre to provide evidence in light with the sort of evidence that other students will produce.
- In assessing, centres can take account of material that has been missed.

Quality assurance (QA)

- Exam boards will put in place requirements for internal QA. Likely to include consistent methodology; Head declaration.
- Every centre should have a check on internal QA. It will focus on process and evidence, rather than second guessing teacher judgments.
- Sample of centres will have evidence reviewed.
- Changes to grades will only occur if not reasonable exercise of academic judgment, rather than marginal difference of opinion.

Concluding thoughts

- The onus is now on schools, unlike last year there is no algorithm.
- Schools need to focus on process:
 - Have a clear policy and process on how grades are calculated
 - Ensure consistency (1) between classes in subjects, (2) across subjects
 - Consider putting the process to the governors for approval
 - Work with other schools and use any networks to ensure process is not out of the norm.

Thank you for listening

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