

# 2021 Exams Process

## Context

- After second lockdown and school closure government decided that examinations would not take place, instead Centre Assessed Grades ( CAGs) would be awarded
- Aware of two years of disrupted learning and the uneven impact on individuals
- Sought to avoid the confusion and controversy of 2020 centre assessments
- More robust and more consistent process
- Undertook a consultation in January 2021- over 100,000 respondents
- Ofqual developed guidance taking this into account to set up a system to ensure centres delivered a

*“fair and objective judgement of the grade they believed a student would have achieved had they taken their exams”*

## Timeline

- January consultation
- February guidance
- 19 –30th April- submissions of Centre Policies
- From 1st June exam board visits to discuss policies if deemed necessary (none here)
- Submission of grades 26<sup>th</sup> May-18<sup>th</sup> June and centre declarations
- Exam boards call for samples of evidence from 21<sup>st</sup> June- 48 hour turnaround for centres
- Call for evidence possible until 16<sup>th</sup> July
- Results award day- 10<sup>th</sup> August A/As level and 12<sup>th</sup> August GCSE
- Appeals window to centre open until 16<sup>th</sup> August
- Appeals to board then until 3<sup>rd</sup> September

## Key principles

The guidance sets out four key principles for examination centres to set out their own policy which had to be submitted for scrutiny and approval and must meet these principles:

- 1 Objectivity- based on an evidence
- 2 Demonstrate awareness of unconscious bias
- 3 Use evidence to identify unconscious bias
- 4 Dialogue with others-review judgements/moderation

## The evidence base

- Holistic- balancing sources of evidence
- Work completed over the course of study – centres urged to teach as long as possible
- Based on the work taught ( but must be sufficient to meet the specifications)
- Aligned to the expectations of previous years-assessments and tasks aligned to the level and format of previous years
- Consistent across classes
- Pupil's own work-making clear where there has been support (SEND, EAL)
- Centres to keep a record of selections and be able to justify choices

## What types of evidence would constitute a student's folder of work?

- Mock exam results and papers
- Students' work in response to exam board materials e.g. past papers, sample questions, practice papers
- Centre created versions of the above as long as the format and the mark schemes used are the same
- Module tests undertaken through the course
- "Substantial" classwork or homework
- Non-exam assessments ( coursework)
- Teachers' records of performance e.g. in PE or Drama

## Unconscious Bias

Exam boards and Ofqual have made materials available to centres for training which our schools have used with teachers to ensure grades are fairly awarded. These deal with many areas and the list below is not exhaustive:

- Awareness of the possible impact of protected characteristics e.g. gender, race, disability
- Perceptions about commitment to school, work or behaviour
- Family, sibling performance
- Knowledge of grades needed for next steps
- Character, views, attitudes aligned to the teacher's
- Undue influence of a pupil's command of language (where this is not relevant to the assessment)
- Systematic bias – class socio-economic background

## Other factors to be aware of:

- Where there has been a significant change of staff, over or under grading to compensate for perception
- Too much emphasis on the most recent work or older work
- Under or over grading where a student's performance is very different to most of the cohort
- Pressure on teachers from students or parents (must be reported)
- Peer pressure on teachers to agree with others in the department



## **Dialogue with others-Steps to ensure accuracy required by exam boards**

- Internal moderation and sign off of all grades by at least two teachers- one the subject leader
- Head of centre sign off with the subject leader- declaration included confirming all exam board requirements had been met
- Benchmarking against similar students over 2017, 18 and 19 when exams were taken and through average subject grades
- Benchmarking evidence also used to identify any tendency to unconscious bias

## **Additionally our schools have undertaken**

- Benchmarking against the expectations of progress in the school over the three years and against national
- Using virtual networks and exam board training to share and discuss grades and evidence
- Cross marking between teachers in school across trusts and across the LA as well as in some cases other schools beyond the LA
- Blind marking by external examiners

## Post grade submission Quality Assurance

- Grades confidential to the centre until award day by board
- Internal QA processes checked by exam boards
- Exam boards benchmark against three last exam years and call for evidence where there is a large differential
- Exam boards call for a randomly chosen selection of 10% of all centres in each subject
- Exam boards call for selections of evidence (5 per subject chosen) from school for moderation/verification
- Exam boards can call for further evidence/ justification prior to agreeing awards
- Students will be able to appeal their grades at centre level and above this at exam board level if they feel these are not representative but would need to give reasons. At appeal the student's folder of work/evidence would be independently reviewed.

## Using grades to determine school performance

- Governors have been advised to be wary of setting numerical targets based on student grades alone for 2021 for head teachers or teachers
- As in 2020, the DfE will not publish any performance tables or benchmark schools
- Ofsted inspectors have been told to disregard performance data from 2020 and 2021 as well as any internal data the school may produce. They will instead use a range of evidence judging pupils work and understanding