

Summary on how GCSE, AS and A Levels will be graded and awarded in summer 2020

Following the cancellation of all public examinations, CCEA and Ofqual (relevant to qualifications that are non-CCEA Examinations i.e. a small number of subjects in Banbridge Academy, which are offered by Examination Bodies on the mainland) have published details of how grades for GCSE, AS and A Level examinations are to be awarded this summer, 2020. Please find below the links to the relevant documents, which have been placed in the Parental Information, Letters Home section of the school website:

Guidance on how grades will be awarded summer 2020 - CCEA qualifications

Guidance on how grades will be awarded summer 2020 - non-CCEA qualifications (Ofqual)

Letter to students from CCEA - Grading Summer 2020

Letter to students from non-CCEA qualifications (Ofqual) – Grading Summer 2020

We know that it has been an anxious time waiting for CCEA to publish this information and that there are aspects of the process which are not easily understood or immediately clear. As a result, we have provided a summary of key points below in an effort to explain the process.

In summary, CCEA’s approach will be as follows:

A Level Awarding: For A Level, we anticipate that the calculated grade, which uses statistical predictions based on previous student performance combined with centre assessed grades and centre rank orders, will provide a reliable grade outcome. Students will not be required to take A Level examinations through an additional sitting, such as an autumn series.

AS Awarding: All AS students will receive an AS grade and there will be no AS examinations until Summer 2021. The grade awarded will be based on previous student performance, combined with centre assessed grades and centre subject rank orders. Awarding organisations are working towards the model on which grades will be awarded and in which centre assessed grades and centre rank orders will be used. The nature of the AS grade awarded in 2020 will not allow it to contribute to A Level results in 2021. In Summer 2021, students will have two options for their A Level award. If a student chooses to only sit the required A2 units, then their AS outcomes will be calculated using statistical predictions based on their performance in the A2 units. If they choose to sit any AS units, alongside the A2 units, they will be awarded the highest grade at A Level from either route.

GCSE Awarding: Students who were due to sit GCSE examinations that would have led to a whole GCSE qualification this summer will be issued a grade using a combination of average centre performance, centre assessed grades and rank ordering. Year 11 students who were due to sit units that will lead to GCSE grades in 2021, will not receive a unit result this year. For those students, there will be two options. In 2021 they can sit the units they planned to take next year, and not the unit(s) they entered for in Summer 2020. These 2020 units will have a mark calculated using statistical predictions based on their performance in the 2021 units. As a result, an overall GCSE grade will be awarded in 2021. Alternatively, they can choose to sit all the units in Summer 2021. Whichever option a student chooses, they will be awarded the highest grade.

OVERVIEW

The Grading Process

For GCSE, AS and A Level grading, schools will be asked to provide CCEA with “**centre assessment grades and centre rank orders**” for all pupils on each course. Please note in terms of public examinations, schools are referred to as centres.

Centre assessment grades

These grades should represent “the grade that each student is most likely to have achieved if they had sat their examinations and internally assessed components” (i.e. coursework or controlled assessment). The grades will be calculated by teachers and Heads of Department, drawing upon evidence of the student’s performance across the whole course, using their professional judgement to assess the trajectory of the pupil’s performance and likely final grade if the examinations had taken place.

Centre rank orders

This refers to the rank order of pupils *within* each grade for each subject. CCEA state that, “for example, for all those students with a grade C in GCSE Mathematics, a rank order where 1 is the most secure/highest attaining student, and so on.” Subject teachers and Heads of Department will calculate the rank orders in the same way as centre assessment grades.

The grades and rank orders calculated by subject teachers and Heads of Department will be submitted initially to senior staff in the Academy for review who will use whole school data for current cohorts and historical data for the school. Once any refinements have been agreed and the final grades and rank orders for each pupil in each subject have been completed, we will send this information to CCEA. Schools have been told by CCEA that further guidance on this aspect will be forthcoming. The final grades submitted will be signed off by the Principal. Schools will be asked to provide their grades and rank order information to CCEA no *earlier* than 29th May.

CCEA will use the centre assessment grades and rank order information provided by the school, alongside historic data about a school’s results and computer modelling in order to prevent grade anomalies at subject and/or school level i.e. grades that are too high in GCSE subject X or grades that are too low in A Level subject Y. This is CCEA’s standardisation process to ensure fair outcomes across schools and subjects at each examination level.

On the standardisation process, CCEA state that, “We will apply the statistical standardisation to align the judgements across and within centres, so that, as far as possible, your students are not unfairly advantaged or disadvantaged this summer. This means that the centre assessment grades you submit and the final calculated grades that students receive could be different.” CCEA are clear that the grades submitted by schools could be changed by CCEA after computer modelling and standardisation. Indeed, it is certain that some such changes will take place within this process overall.

Pupils’ final grades will be the grades awarded by CCEA.

Pupils will receive their final grades on the following dates:

- A Level and AS Level – Thursday 13 August 2020
- GCSE – Thursday 20th August 2020

How will A Levels be awarded?

CCEA will use statistical modelling based upon pupils’ previous achievements (e.g. at AS Level) in combination with the grades and rank order information provided by schools to produce a final grade for each pupil in each subject. It will not be possible for a Year 14 pupil to resit an AS module this summer but those Year 14 pupils who entered for AS resits will have this taken into account. Both the school assessment process and CCEA’s computer modelling will allow for AS resits to be factored into the overall grade calculation. There will be no A Level or AS exams available for pupils to sit until summer 2021.

Please note that media reports referring to schools using “predicted grades” are misleading. Predicted grades refer to the grades provided to UCAS for university offers/admissions in the autumn term of Year 14. The summer 2020 exam grading process requires schools to provide CCEA with “centre assessment grades” as outlined above. These will draw upon a wider range of information from across the full duration of A Level courses.

How will AS be awarded?

AS pupils will be awarded a qualification in a similar way to those taking A Levels and GCSEs this summer. AS pupils will receive a final AS grade from CCEA, based upon the exam board’s statistical modelling plus the assessment grades and rank order information provided by schools. The AS grade awarded by CCEA to pupils this summer will **not** contribute to their A Level results in 2021. In summer 2021, AS pupils will be given two options for completing their A Level qualifications. Option 1- pupils will be to sit their A2 units only, and their A Level grade will be awarded based solely on their performance in those units (which will be used in turn to calculate marks for their AS units). Option 2 – pupils will be to sit both AS and A2 units, if they wish to do so. If a pupil chooses both options, then the pupil will receive the higher grade.

This means that Year 13 pupils will receive AS grades for all their subjects in summer 2020. If a pupil is taking 4 AS subjects, then this will help the pupil to decide which subject to drop for Year 14. The 4th AS subject which is not continued will be awarded a final AS grade from the summer 2020 process and the pupil will be able to use this for applications to university or employment. The 3 subjects which almost all pupils take on to A Level will be completed in the summer 2021 A2 exams, as described above. A pupil will be awarded a full A Level grade in these 3 subjects in summer 2021. The AS grades awarded in summer 2020 will not contribute to the A Level grade.

How will GCSE be awarded?

GCSE pupils will be awarded a qualification in a similar way to those taking A Levels and AS Levels this summer. GCSE pupils will receive a final GCSE grade from CCEA, based upon the exam board’s statistical modelling, plus the assessment grades and rank order information provided by schools.

For additional information re: Year 11 summer CCEA modules

Year 11 students will not be receiving module results this summer for external modules they were due to sit. Instead, two options will be put in place for next year: Option 1: students may complete ALL modules, including modules they were due to sit this summer, at the end of Year 12 in summer 2021. Option 2: students can complete their Year 12 (terminal) GCSE modules ONLY at the end of Year 12 in summer 2021. In this circumstance, they will receive an extrapolated mark based on these Year 12 modules for their Year 11 modules based on historical CCEA statistical information. CCEA states that ‘whichever option a student chooses, they will be awarded the highest grade’

Appeals

CCEA will not be able to run the normal appeals process as there will be no examination answers from pupils to scrutinise. CCEA are looking at constructing a new appeals process for summer 2020 which reflects the unique circumstances of 2020 and once we are informed about this new process we will pass that information on to pupils and parents.

Early opportunity examinations

CCEA have decided not to offer any early opportunity examinations i.e. a chance to sit an exam in autumn 2020 in any GCSE, AS or A Level subject. The exam regulators in England and Wales have declared an intention to offer these exams and are currently consulting about this option. CCEA will

offer their normal exam schedule for 2020-21, with a very small number of GCSE subjects available in November 2020, January 2021 and March 2021.

Can I access my centre assessed grades or rank order position?

This information will be confidential and schools are not permitted to share either the centre assessed grade or rank order with pupils and parents or anyone outside the school. The school will protect this information and ensure that it is shared only with those staff who have an essential role in the grading process. Please be assured that our school will be objective and fair when providing grades and rank orders to CCEA, showcasing the historically excellent outcomes for our pupils, whilst respecting the integrity of the process.

How will Schools work out grades and rank orders?

CCEA have stated that, “Teachers should draw on all existing records and available evidence” when determining centre assessment grades and rank orders. Teachers are therefore expected to use their holistic professional judgement drawing upon a range of possible sources of evidence. These could include:

- Previous performance by a pupil e.g. at GCSE or AS Level for a Year 14 pupil;
- Records of each pupil’s performance over the course of study;
- Performance on any coursework or controlled assessment (known as ‘non-exam assessment’ or NEA), but pupils are not required to complete their NEA work and schools should not submit any marks for any completed NEA work;
- Performance on any class or homework assessments and mock exams taken over the entire course of study (e.g. Year 11 and Year 12 at GCSE; Year 13 and Year 14 at A Level);
- Participation in performances or practicals in subjects where this is assessed, e.g. music, PE;
- Tiers of entry in a GCSE subject, to reflect the overall balance of foundation and higher tier exams entered by a pupil;
- Previous results in the school for the subject at that level (e.g. historical outcomes for the Academy over the years in subject X at GCSE);
- The performance of this year’s cohort compared to those in previous years at the Academy; and
- Any other relevant information.

Pupils studying for GCSE, AS and A Level examinations

Year 14 should utilise the time to research their chosen careers and prepare for the next stage in their educational journey and career. Pupils in **Years 12 and 13**, will notice that teachers will be increasingly directing them towards the transition to the next phase of their education. It will be important to engage with this material so that pupils can make a positive start to the new academic year in the courses that they have chosen to study. Pupils in **Year 11** will continue to study the GCSE specification.

Initial Queries and Concerns

Will my access arrangement be taken into account by the school when calculating my grade?

Access arrangements are provided as a reasonable adjustment to ensure that a pupil is not disadvantaged in an examination. Typical examples include having additional time, having a reader or scribe, or taking the examination in a separate room. CCEA have directed schools to “take account of likely achievement with the reasonable adjustment/access arrangement in place”.

Will my application for Special Consideration for the summer 2020 exams still apply?

Special Consideration usually applies “if a student is unable to take an assessment or suffers a traumatic event that might affect their performance” at the time of the exam. CCEA have stated that there will be no Special Consideration process for summer 2020 and directed schools to calculate a grade to “reflect how students would have performed under ordinary circumstances”.

Will my illness and extended period of time off school affect the grade the school gives to me?

Schools have been instructed to take account of such periods of absence when calculating a grade for a pupil. The focus is upon the overall quality of the pupil’s performance and the school should know enough about the pupil so that it can ‘fill in the gap’ and project their trajectory to the final grade as if the absence never happened.

Will a dip in my performance affect the overall grade the school gives to me?

Schools have been instructed to take account of such circumstances when calculating a grade for a pupil. The focus is upon calculating a grade which reflects the overall quality and trajectory of a pupil’s performance in a course and the likely outcome which this would have produced if the exams had taken place as normal this summer.

In all of these scenarios, the focus is upon a holistic judgement of the pupil’s performance. To some extent, schools are being asked to project what would happen for pupils in these circumstances ‘all things being equal’. It is not an exact science and the staff at Banbridge Academy will do their best to support our pupils in a way that is fair to everyone and respectful of the new system and CCEA’s instructions.

What do pupils and parents need to do now?

CCEA state simply that, “You do not need to do anything”. This will be the case for the vast majority of pupils. They will have completed all that is necessary in their courses and the school will have all the information needed to calculate a centre assessment grade and rank order to send to CCEA. Pupils and parents can rest assured that subject teachers, Heads of Department, Form Tutors, Heads of Year and Heads of Key Stage have a very good range of information about their pupils from which they can calculate their grades.

Please resist the temptation to try and tell the school everything about your journey through your studies and courses. Your teachers will be very busy working on this process on your behalf and they won’t be able to respond.

A very small number of pupils may have something new and significant to tell us about their personal circumstances and if that is the case, please contact the school via the main school account (info@banbridgeacademy.banbridge.ni.sch.uk). We will always listen and take that particular situation into account, and it is essential such information is communicated by Friday 1 May 2020.

Conclusion

It will be evident from the information above that CCEA expects schools to oversee this unique task with professionalism, integrity and in a spirit of fairness for all, and there will be measures in place to ensure that approach occurs across centres and any anomalies are controlled. At the Academy, we have a wide range of useful evidence about a pupil’s performance in a subject over the entire duration of the course which will help teachers plot a pupil’s trajectory towards the most likely grade they would have achieved by the end of that course, as if the pupil had taken the examination under normal circumstances. Teachers will award grades using their holistic professional judgement, with the

support of senior staff, and it is our collective aim to reflect the high quality outcomes that our pupils attain year on year, whilst respecting the integrity of the process.

Mr R S McLoughlin
Principal
Banbridge Academy