



# Awarding grades for Cambridge International qualifications in the June 2020 series

On 23 March 2020, we announced that we would not hold the June 2020 exam series anywhere in the world, to protect the safety of students and teachers. We said we would take steps to provide students with fair grades using alternative assessment methods, so students could get on with their educational journeys as soon as possible.

We set out those steps here. Our approach is to ask centres to **collaborate with us** as we make **evidence-based decisions** about grades for each candidate in each subject.

In developing a new process to assess students and provide grades, we have engaged with different entities worldwide, including other awarding bodies, governments and universities. We have also engaged with the UK government's Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual), which has developed a similar process for the GCSEs and A Levels taken by schools in England.

**The Cambridge International process has four steps:**

## STEP 1

**Centre determines predicted grades for each candidate for each syllabus entered**

Many of you will already have submitted forecast grades for your candidates through our usual processes.

Now, we will shortly ask you to submit new **predicted grades**. Predicted grades do not necessarily need to be the same as forecast grades and must be submitted separately.

**We will announce soon the mechanism for submitting the predicted grades.**

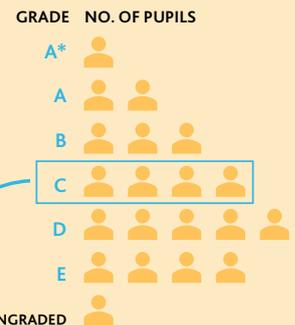
Subject teachers should determine a predicted grade for each candidate in each syllabus based on the evidence they have gathered on candidates' performance, weighing up what these different sources of evidence tell them about each candidate's performance.

The predicted grade should be the grade that, in the professional opinion of the teacher, the candidate would have been most likely to achieve if the June 2020 exam series had taken place.

## STEP 1

Teachers use evidence and judgement to grade every student entered in each syllabus in their centre, to produce **predicted grades**

Example A Level syllabus:



## STEP 2

Teachers rank students based on expected attainment within each grade in each syllabus



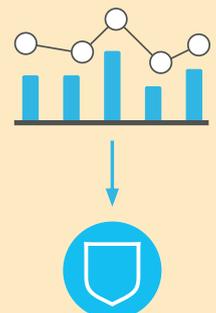
## STEP 3

Head of centre confirms **predicted grades** and **rank orders** for each syllabus and sends to Cambridge International



## STEP 4

Cambridge International carries out a standardisation process, combining data from the centre with other data, and awards final grades



### How to determine your candidates' predicted grades

As a subject teacher, you should **use all of the evidence available to you** to determine the candidates' predicted grades, so that you can make sure the judgement you make is as **objective and accurate as possible**.

The evidence you gather is crucial to the fairness of the June 2020 series and draws on your professional experience.

We understand that different centres may gather different combinations of evidence. We trust that our centres will use their professional judgement in knowing what will constitute reliable evidence. We recognise that centres may have incomplete evidence, and that the range and amount of evidence will vary between different subjects. Judgements should be made on the evidence that is available.

You need to retain the evidence you use to inform your predicted grades and rank orders. However, you do not need to send the evidence to us unless we ask you to – see step 4.

You could use the following process to reach your decision for each candidate:

#### A) Review whatever evidence you can gather of your candidate's performance:

- Look back at candidate performance in classwork, coursework, assignments and mock exams to make an overall judgement. You can also use work the candidate has produced remotely since your centre has been closed, but you should be confident that it is the candidate's own work. You can also consider information you have already gathered from baseline tests (such as Yellis and Alis tests from Cambridge CEM) or external tests.
- Where different pieces of evidence about your candidate relate to different components in the assessment, the syllabus document will indicate what weighting is attached to each component.
- If your candidate is taking an A Level by carrying forward an AS Level result from a previous series, their performance in the AS Level is a strong indicator of their likely outcome in the A Level. Candidates who achieve a particular grade in their AS Level would normally be expected to achieve the same grade in their A Level after a further year of study and making progress at a usual pace. Candidates who achieve a grade 'a' in their AS Level and who progress fast in the subsequent year of study are most likely to achieve a grade A\* at A Level.
- If your candidate was due to resit the syllabus in June 2020 having taken the examination in an earlier series as well, then their result in their previous sitting is a strong predictor of their result in the resit. Candidates who are resitting are aiming to achieve a higher grade, but evidence shows that this does not always happen. About half receive the same grade as before. It is unusual for candidates to improve by more than one

grade. You should consider this when making your judgements.

- If your candidate was due to use access arrangements in the June 2020 series, their predicted grade should be the grade they would be most likely to achieve with these access arrangements in place.

#### B) Compare the evidence from your candidates against evidence of candidate performance at different grades that we have provided to you:

- For some syllabuses, you can find example marked responses of candidate work on the School Support Hub. Look for **Example Candidate Response** booklets and **coursework training handbooks** to see what the expected level of performance is for particular marks. Compare this level of performance to that which your candidates have demonstrated. You may be able to use **past paper grade thresholds** and **mark schemes** to help you to convert the performance you have observed to a predicted grade.
- For some syllabuses there are grade descriptions available, usually in the syllabus document.

**C) If you have submitted forecast grades to us in previous series**, you should look back at how closely these have corresponded to the grades achieved by candidates. This will help you to align your predicted grades in June 2020 with the performance standard required for each grade.

#### Take care not to use these ways of arriving at a judgement about predicted grades:

- Apply a target grade set during the course to encourage a student to apply themselves, since these targets are often higher than the grades that students actually achieve
- A prediction of what grade the candidate could have achieved on a good day if all the questions on the question paper had been in the student's areas of greatest strength
- A prediction of what grade the candidate would have achieved on a bad day if all the questions had been in the student's areas of greatest weakness.

#### Making sure that your predicted grades are consistent for each subject

If more than one teacher has taught the syllabus at your centre, then where possible, the teachers should work together to make sure that their judgements have been **applied consistently across classes and to private candidates**. In many cases this will need to be done through conference calls. You may find it easier for one teacher, such as the Head of Department, to lead this process.

This check will make sure that all candidates at your centre have been judged fairly for the syllabus. During this check, some of the predicted grades your teachers have given may need to be changed in order to make sure that all judgements are consistent.



### Determining predicted grades for 9-1 graded syllabuses

If you have made an entry for a Cambridge IGCSE syllabus graded on the 9-1 grade set, your predicted grade must be on this grade set. If this is the first series for which you have made an entry for this syllabus, having previously used the version of the syllabus which is graded with the A\*-G grade set, then you should bear in mind that the syllabus requirements are exactly the same and that:

- the threshold of grade 7 is the same as the threshold of grade A
- the threshold of grade 4 is the same as the threshold of grade C
- the threshold of grade 1 is the same as the threshold of grade G.

You may find it helpful to look at the grade thresholds from the June 2019 series to compare other grades on the two grade sets.

#### STEP 2

### Determining a rank order of candidates within each grade for each syllabus

You should now consider the group of candidates entered for a syllabus for whom you have predicted the same grade. Your centre should place these candidates in a rank order. A rank order is a list of candidates in order of their attainment, from the highest-attaining to the lowest-attaining.

Do this **separately for every grade** at which you have predicted candidates will achieve, and for each syllabus in which you have entered candidates.

In the rank order, give a rank of **1 to the highest-attaining candidate** – that is, the one who the evidence suggests is the most securely above the threshold for the grade. Give a rank of 2 to the second highest-attaining candidate, and so on.

You must place all the candidates for whom you have been able to decide on a predicted grade on the rank order for that grade.

The rank orders you produce **may not contain ties** – that is, you may not place two or more candidates in the same position. In other words, even where the evidence shows that two or more candidates have performed in a very similar way, you must use your professional judgement to separate them and place them in the order you believe is most appropriate.

You should produce **one** rank order for your centre **for each grade in each syllabus**.

You **should not** produce separate rank orders for:

- different entry options
- different classes
- school and private candidates

However, you **should** produce **separate rank orders for**:

- core and extended tiers of a tiered Cambridge IGCSE, which you should treat as separate syllabuses (even though they share a syllabus code)
- AS Level candidates and A Level candidates, even where the syllabus code is the same for the AS Level and the A Level. This is because the AS Level grades are different from the A Level grades.

### Making sure your rank order is consistent across your teachers

If more than one teacher has taught the syllabus at your centre, then, if at all possible, the teachers should work together to make sure that students are appropriately ranked in relation to students in other classes.

One possible approach is for one teacher, perhaps the Head of Department, to produce an initial rank order for each grade. This first attempt is then shared with the other teachers. In a conference call or meeting with the other teachers, each candidate in each rank order is discussed in turn, starting with the highest-ranked candidate. For each candidate, every teacher is given the opportunity to express their view and argue, on the basis of the evidence, that the candidate's position in the rank order should be raised above that of the candidates already discussed.

This process will make sure that all candidates at your centre have been fairly and consistently placed in the rank order for their predicted grade. During this process, some of the initial positions in the rank order may need to be changed in order to make sure that the rank orders are consistent and acceptable to all subject teachers.

#### STEP 3

### Head of centre confirms the predicted grades and rank orders. Centre sends them to Cambridge International.

Once your subject teachers have agreed on a predicted grade for each candidate about whom you have evidence, and a rank order of the candidates for each predicted grade, the head of centre will need to **confirm that**:

- they are satisfied that the predicted grades and rank orders have been properly decided by the subject teachers based on the available evidence
- they reflect a fair professional judgement of the candidates concerned.



We will not ask heads of centre to scrutinise and agree with every judgement that has been made, only to confirm that the process of making the judgements has been carried out professionally, under their oversight and by people whose judgements they trust.

The centre will then need to send the grades to Cambridge International. When the predicted grades and rank orders are submitted to Cambridge International, the person submitting them will be required to indicate that they have the consent of the head of centre.

As with any exam series, Cambridge International will investigate any attempts to undermine this system that could be regarded as malpractice.

### Sending data to Cambridge International

We are working to adapt our IT systems to collect these grades and the rank order in a way that is as simple as possible for centres. We will provide detailed instructions about how and when to submit the data as soon as possible.

We recognise that centres need some certainty so that they can plan this work with their teams, so we confirm that the deadline for submitting data to us will be no earlier than **29 May 2020** and that centres will have a window of at least two weeks in which to submit the data.

### Sharing data with students and families

Students and families want to know that the process of generating grades is rigorous, objective and fair. We will publish a message for students and families that heads of centre may wish to circulate.

Centres **must not**, under any circumstances, share the predicted grades nor the rank order of students with students, or their parents/carers or any other individuals outside the centre. This is to protect the integrity of teachers' judgements, and to avoid teachers, heads of department, senior leaders or heads of centre being put under pressure by students and parents to submit a grade that is not supported by the evidence. Since the final grades for some or all students in a centre could be different from those submitted, it also helps to manage students' expectations.

## STEP 4

### Cambridge International carries out a standardisation process, combining data from the centre with other data, and awards final grades

Cambridge International will take data submitted by centres and carry out a **statistical standardisation** exercise. This exercise will use statistical evidence from the historical performance of your centre in the syllabus as well as global performance statistics.

We will do this to align judgements across centres, so that, as far as possible, students are assessed on the same basis and not unfairly advantaged or disadvantaged in the next steps of their education journeys.

The standardisation exercise will enable us to see whether the distribution of your predicted grades for June 2020 is **what we would expect your candidates to achieve**. This statistical standardisation process will not change the rank order of students within your centre. However, if the distribution of your predicted grades is not what we expect to see, then **we will adjust candidates' grades** so that the distribution of grades that we award matches our expectations.

The statistical standardisation exercise will mean that **the grade we award to a candidate may or may not be the same as the predicted grade** that you provide.

The statistical standardisation exercise also means that there will be **no advantage gained by centres whose predicted grades are unrealistic**. If the statistics show that your predicted grades are more generous than our expectation, we will adjust the grades of some or all of your candidates downwards. If the statistics show that your predicted grades are more severe than our expectation, then we will adjust the grades of some or all of your candidates upwards.

The greater the difference between your predicted grades and our expectations, the more candidates' grades will be adjusted and the bigger the adjustments.

The standardisation exercise will **not change the rank order** of candidates provided by the centre.

You should retain the evidence that you have gathered to inform your predicted grades and rank orders. In some cases, we may ask you to send us the evidence you have considered in making your professional judgements. If we ask you for evidence, it is likely to be for a sample of your candidates, and we will identify the candidates whose evidence we would like to see.



### Appeals

We will make sure every centre has the right to appeal the grades it has been awarded, as part of providing a fair and equitable system.

We are still working on an appeals process for the June 2020 series, and we will publish full details at a later date.

For now, we can tell you that there will be an appeals process, and it is likely to be confined to situations in which you have reason to believe we have made an error in our standardisation process.

Cambridge International has drawn on its wealth of assessment expertise in developing this method of grading students and we believe it is the most valid, fair and effective method in these unique circumstances. At the same time, no statistical method is capable of matching the accuracy and reliability of a full examination series. Some candidates will receive grades that they did not expect. The collaborative approach that we have designed will ensure that these unexpected situations are kept to a minimum.

The same standardisation method will be applied to all centres taking a syllabus, and we will not subsequently apply a different method for centres whose results disappoint them.

For those candidates who receive disappointing grades there will be an option to sit an exam in either the November 2020 or the June 2021 series.

### Key questions

- **Are predicted grades the same as forecast grades?** No. A predicted grade is new information that we will ask you to submit, together with rank orders, as part of this new process. Predicted grades should stem from a centre's judgement about each candidate, and combine all the evidence a centre wants to consider, including any forecast grades the centre has previously submitted to us.
- **Will centres be required to send evidence to Cambridge International?** You should retain the evidence and we may ask to see some of it after we have reviewed your predicted grades and rank orders.
- **How do I send predicted grades and rank orders to Cambridge International?** We are developing our IT systems to help you do this easily. You do not need send us anything yet. We will let you know when to start sending us predicted grades and rank orders, and we want to reassure you that we will give you enough time to complete the process.
- **Will centres tell students what their predicted grades are?** No. They must not do so. This is to prevent undue pressure being put on teachers and centres.

### Staying in touch

You can find our advice on our website at [www.cambridgeinternational.org/covid](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/covid)

If you have any questions, please get in touch with us via: [www.cambridgeinternational.org/help](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/help)  
or contact your local Cambridge associate

We will update centres again on 16 April. We wish everyone in the Cambridge International community well at this difficult time