



Predicted Grades Policy

Context

The College prepares pupils for a variety of post-sixth form destinations, including further study in Higher Education (Universities in the UK and abroad), apprenticeships, employment and vocational training. For some of these destinations, principally in relation to UK University applications, the College is required to provide predictions of the grades that a pupil is expected to attain at GCE Advanced or IB Diploma level.

Timing

Applications to UK Universities through the UCAS system (i.e. the vast majority of such applications) are accompanied by predicted grades. The grades are submitted along with the applications by the stated deadlines (2nd October for Conservatoires; 15th October for Oxford and Cambridge, and for certain universities' courses in Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Science; 15th January for most other applications). Following long-standing practice we endeavour not to delay applications until January as we believe it is in the pupils' interests to submit them to UCAS during the Autumn Term.

Predicted Grades and the Application Process

UK universities advertise the typical offer grades for their courses on their web pages. These grades are also visible on the UCAS Search area and on Unifrog, the platform we use to support our applicants. Requirements are expressed in terms of IB points (e.g. 38-40 IB points), A Level grades (e.g. AAA – AAB), and UCAS tariff points (e.g. xx-xx UCAS points). Sometimes a single grade is given (38 IB points / AAA at A level); often a range is shown. Some universities publicise lower 'contextualised' grades: these are applicable to candidates from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. Whilst Universities can and do make offers outside their publicised ranges, this tends to be exceptional.

Grades, however, are only one element in the selection process. Universities weigh a number of factors, and there is no single formula for this. Universities consider predicted grades, historical performance in public examinations, the pupil's Personal Statement, the school's Reference and, in some areas such as Medicine, relevant work experience. In addition, some universities, notably Oxford and Cambridge, require one or more of the following: an additional Personal Statement, samples of written work, a pre-interview written assessment, an interview (sometimes including written assessment). Whilst each element is important, the results of examination performance and pre-interview tests provide particularly valuable objective data.

Predicting Grades

Both universities and schools appreciate the fact that predictions are estimates and cannot be 100% reliable (although our experience shows a good correlation between our predictions and eventual outcomes). A temptation to 'inflate' such grades has led to poorer correlation for many schools, in turn undermining the credibility of their estimates. In common with other leading independent schools, we do not collude in the practice of 'grade inflation'.

Date of Policy: 01/09/23

Next review: 01/11/24

Owner: GAH

Our policy follows the guidance of the Department for Education, whose spokesperson (reported in The Independent, 4.2.16) said: "We trust teachers to act in the best interests of their students by giving fair predicted A level grades that accurately reflect their ability. Distorting grades would be unfair on the pupils involved and could result in universities having to artificially inflate their entrance requirements, rendering it pointless in the long run."

Our approach is based on the following principles:

- We have the pupils' best interests at heart. We wish to support their applications so that they make a successful transition to higher education;
- We draw on a wealth of professional judgement and experience. Teachers consider factors such as previous public examination performance; performance under test conditions in school; data drawn from tracking tests and termly assessments; classroom performance and engagement with the subject; comparative performance against the standards achieved by previous pupils on the course; any special factors which may have caused temporary under-performance.
- Heads of Department, in conjunction with the subject teachers, give predicted grades which, based on the criteria above, reflect a realistic-optimistic assessment. That is, the prediction will indicate what the candidate might achieve, taking all factors into account, at the best in his or her range. Thus, a candidate who is working at B-grade level but who demonstrates the clear potential to achieve an A grade will be given the benefit of an A-grade prediction if an application of the criteria justifies it.
- We do not base predictions on what a pupil would like to achieve in order to get into a particular university or course. Nor do we predict on the basis of a pupil's promise to work harder in order to achieve it. This does the pupil no service, as offers based on unrealistic grades are not likely to be met, and a UCAS choice will have been wasted.
- On this basis, we are confident that the grades we predict are an honest assessment of the pupil's most likely achievement, based on evidence and professional judgement.

After Predictions

Pupils are notified of their predicted grades by their tutors around the end of September in the U6 Autumn Term. A pupil may appeal to the respective Head of Department against a predicted grade: this must be done within five days of receiving the prediction. However, appeals will be considered under the criteria above: a grade will not be altered simply because a pupil aspires to a higher grade or a particular course; nor because a pupil makes a commitment to improve. An appeal, to be successful, would have to show that the criteria used in making the prediction should reasonably have resulted in a higher predicted grade. If the grade is unchanged on appeal, the pupil may make a further appeal to the Head of Sixth Form within three days of the original appeal decision. The Head of Sixth Form will review the case and give a final decision as soon as is practicably possible.

In the exceptional case that a pupil's prospects improve very significantly during the period following the submission of an application to UCAS, a further appeal may be made to the

respective Head of Department. This would need to be supported by substantive evidence of sustained and significant improvement. If a change in the predicted grade is warranted, the College's UCAS team will contact the pupil's chosen course providers to communicate this change.