

Nottingham Free School Examinations 2020

Context

Extracts from Ofqual's guidance for teachers, students, parents and carers:

'On 18 March 2020, the Secretary of State for Education announced that the summer 2020 GCSE, AS and A level exam series would be cancelled in order to help fight the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) and that students due to sit the exams would be awarded a grade based on an assessment of the grade they would have been most likely to achieve had exams gone ahead.'

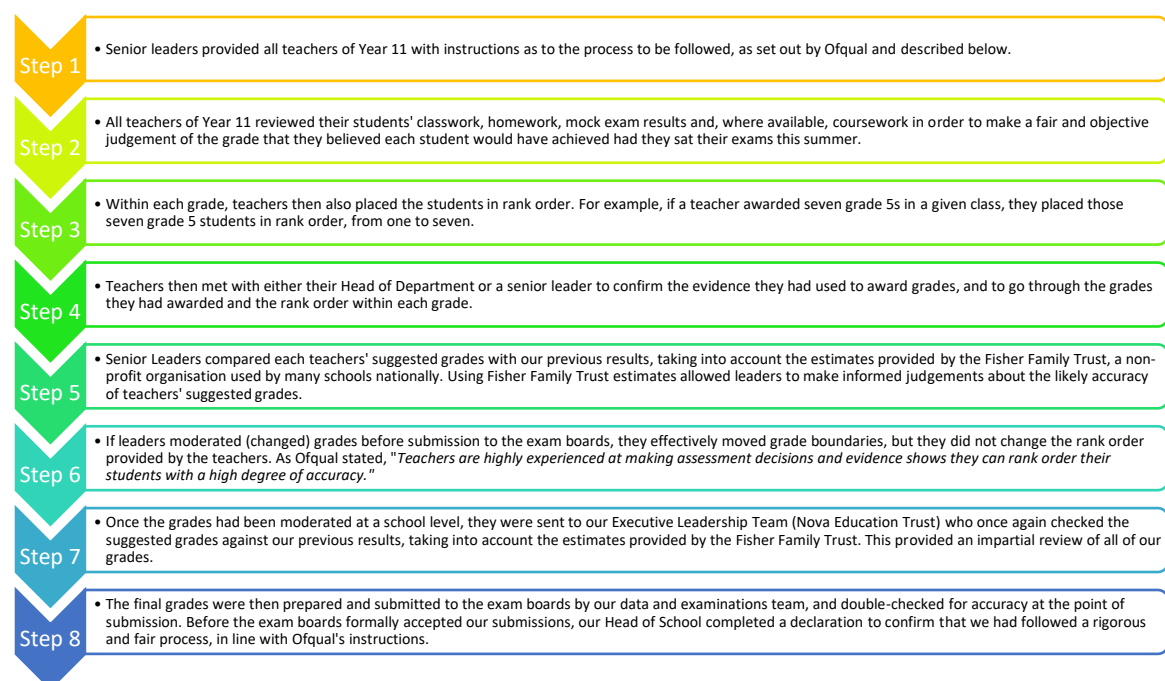
We are asking schools and colleges to use their professional experience to make a fair and objective judgement of the grade they believe a student would have achieved had they sat their exams this year. It is important that schools and colleges take into account the full range of available evidence when they grade students - including non-exam assessment; the results of any homework assignments or mock exams; and any other records of student performance over the course of study. We are also asking schools and colleges to provide a rank order of students within each grade in a subject. This is because the statistical standardisation process will need more granular information than the grade alone.

Teachers are highly experienced at making assessment decisions and evidence shows they can rank order their students with a high degree of accuracy.

In large schools and colleges, subject teachers within a department should discuss the rank order and come to a shared view of the standard being applied. There are a number of ways in which this can be done, including for example, for each teacher to grade and rank order their students; discuss and compare the abilities of students at the top and bottom of the rank order within each grade to ensure that a consistent standard is being applied; adjust the grades accordingly; and then integrate the rank orders by discussing students at the top of the rank order and working down using examples of student work.'

How NFS teachers have arrived at centre assessment grades and rank orders

Our staff have followed a coordinated and consistent process in line with the Ofqual instructions outlined above, under the guidance of the school's senior leadership team. The final internal moderation of the grades was completed by the Head of School. All schools within the Nova Education Trust then submitted their grades and rank orders to the Executive team. These leaders then completed an impartial review of the data, and helped us to address any anomalies. The flow chart below gives a simple summary of our process:



What happens next?

All secondary schools submitted their centre assessment grades and rank orders to the appropriate examination boards through a secure process of online submission by 12th June 2020. The examination boards will now apply a standardisation process to our grades, which Ofqual describes as follows:

'To make sure that grades are fair between schools and colleges, exam boards will put all centre assessment grades through a process of standardisation using a model developed with Ofqual. The standardisation model will draw on the following sources of evidence: historical outcomes for each centre; the prior attainment (Key Stage 2) of this year's students and those in previous years within each centre; and the expected national grade distribution for the subject given the prior attainment of the national entry.'

Standardisation will not change the rank order of students within each school or college; nor will it assume that the distribution of grades in each subject/centre should be the same. However, if grading judgements in a subject in some schools and colleges appear to be more severe or generous than others, exam boards will adjust the grades of some or all of those students upwards or downwards accordingly. This means that the centre assessment grades submitted by schools and colleges and the final grade that students receive could be different. It also means that adjustments to centre assessment grades might be different in different subjects.'

At the point of submission, our Head of School, who is also the 'Head of Centre' signed a declaration, an example of which (from AQA) is shown below:

Declaration

- I confirm that these centre assessment grades, and the rank order of students have been checked for accuracy, reviewed by a second member of staff (where possible) and are accurate and represent the objective and professional judgements made by my staff, that entries were appropriate for each candidate and that each candidate has no more than one entry per subject.*
- Having reviewed the relevant processes and data, I am confident that they honestly and fairly represent the grades that these students would have been most likely to achieve if they had sat their exams as planned, and that they have not been disclosed to either the candidate or their parent/guardian.*
- I understand that exam boards will conduct a statistical standardisation exercise, using a model developed with Ofqual, and that, if the profile of grades submitted is substantially different from what might be expected based on my centre's historical results and the prior attainment of this year's students, the grades for my centre will be adjusted to bring them into line with national standards.*
- Where a student would have been entitled to reasonable adjustments or access arrangements, the information submitted reflects the student's likely achievement if they had been able to sit their examinations with the intended reasonable adjustment or access arrangement in place.*

Results Day 2020

Examination boards intend to release students' final grades to schools in the same way as in other years, and so students will be able to collect their results on Thursday 20th August, from 09:00 a.m. We will be communicating more information directly to the students before the end of the summer term.