

UCAS Grades Information (January 2024)

1.0 Introduction

UCAS grades are a key part of the application process for higher education, school leaver schemes, apprenticeships and employment. The School will provide UCAS grades for all Year 12 students to support these applications, so that Universities and employers are best able to assess students' potential and suitability for their chosen courses or job roles.

2.0 How are predicted grades decided?

The School adopts an optimistic, consistent and evidence-based approach to UCAS grades, which ensures that UCAS grades are both aspirational and realistic. Subject teachers and Departments determine the UCAS grades for their students, as they know them best, and are able to draw upon a wealth of experience and professional judgment in providing UCAS grades. Grades will be based on the student's performance during their first year of A level study and teachers will consider some or all of the following factors when making their decision:

- Yr12 mock examination results
- Grades awarded in progress tests
- Performance in homework assignments
- Student's attitude and commitment to learning
- Coursework, portfolio, practical evidence or other non-examined elements
- GCSE results

Teachers will provide a grade that they feel are a true and honest reflection of the student's ability and potential. UCAS grades will be optimistic, assuming high levels of commitment, hard work and a certain degree of improvement in the second year. However, it is important to emphasise that students may not always achieve their UCAS grade in the face of more challenging second year content. We will provide regular and reliable feedback to students and parents about a student's progress. Departments will not base UCAS grades on what students require to apply for a particular course, university or job. The potential consequence of over-predicting grades is that students may receive an offer(s) that they are unlikely to meet, leading to disappointment on results day and/or students might gain admission to a course on which they cannot succeed.

3.0 When are UCAS grades finalised?

Teachers provide UCAS grades ahead of the Transition Interviews in mid-July. Each year the exact date will vary depending on the mock examination period. Teachers will also provide subject specific comments for students' UCAS and employment references at the end of the academic year. Grades are reviewed again in September of Year 13 to take account of any outstanding assessments, admissions tests, work, research or work experience

completed over the summer period. Students are informed of their UCAS grades via Unifrog. They have the opportunity to discuss these with teaching Staff and tutors, who will help students make informed choices about suitable university courses and employment options. The Sixth Form Team will also discuss UCAS Grades during the students' transition interview. All UCAS grades are finalised by 1st October. Revisions to UCAS grades will only be made after this date in exceptional circumstances. Once the UCAS application has been submitted, there is no opportunity to revise the predicted grades if a student improves or declines in performance during the course of Year 13. However, if a student meets and exceeds the conditions of their conditional firm offer on Results Day, they may phone around to see if there is a course through clearing that they had previously felt was out of reach to find an alternative course or university. The Sixth Form Team will provide support to any students who pursue this option.

It is worth noting that teachers will use internal systems to record 'professional predictions' throughout the year and that these may be different to the UCAS Grades which are in Unifrog.

4.0 UCAS References

UCAS grades form part of the UCAS reference and the School will ensure the two are mutually supportive. All students have the opportunity to see and read through their UCAS reference at the point their UCAS application is submitted. However, amendments or changes to the reference will only be made to correct inaccuracies or to provide any other contextual information which has been agreed with the student.

5.0 Appeals

On the rare occasion that a student feels that a particular UCAS grade is not a fair or true reflection of their ability or what they may achieve at the end of Year 13, they can request that their grade is reviewed by the Deputy Head of Sixth Form. The student must outline in writing the reason why they think the UCAS grade is not a fair assessment of what they may achieve. The Head of Sixth Form will then consult with subject teachers and make a decision about whether the grade can be increased. Please note that the final decision on predicted grades rests with the Deputy Head of Sixth Form.

6.0 Over-Inflated UCAS grades

It would be easy for the school to acquiesce to students' and parents' requests and demands to over-inflate A-Level grades. However, the consequences of such actions would lead to students having unrealistic expectations. More realistic UCAS grades encourage students to select more appropriate institutions so that actual grades means they will have a greater chance of securing a university and course of choice. Students on the other hand who fail to meet higher than realistic predictions or offers may find

themselves without a university when results are published and will likely have to go through the Clearing system.

The competition for places on courses is on the increase due to the rising number of 18-year-olds nationally each year as well as a backlog of students with high grades from the Covid years when exams were cancelled. In recent years, students are finding that even with aspirational UCAS grades they are not receiving offers from top tier Universities. The need to apply for a range of courses with grades in line and below UCAS grades is becoming more important than ever to help secure a realistic firm choice and a solid back up insurance choice with attainable grades.

Inflated UCAS grades can also have a negative impact on the school community as a whole, especially for students in lower year groups who will be applying in the future or new students who join the school. University admission tutors build up knowledge of applying school and colleges and how well their UCAS grades match the eventual final outcomes. Gaining a reputation as an educational establishment that over-inflates its students' grades means that future applications are significantly disadvantaged as concerns are raised by a history of disparity between UCAS grades and actual grades and may jeopardise future students' opportunities.