

UCAS Predicted Grades Policy



When a student applies to University through UCAS, the school is asked to give predicted grades in order that Universities are best able to establish the suitability of the student to their chosen courses. Below sets out the predicted grade policy at Whitburn Sixth Form.

When do students get their predicted grades?

Teaching staff will release predicted grades by entering them into Go4Schools after the Year 12 mock exam is marked and standardised. This will be around late May. This ensures that all students, including early-entry applicants (Oxbridge, Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary) have sufficient time to choose their courses appropriately.

Students and families will have an indication of a student's progress throughout Year 12 as results of topic tests etc are entered into Go4Schools. There are two formal reporting points during Year 12, currently a written report in November and a Parent and Carer's Evening in June.

How are predicted grades decided?

It is essential that we predict grades that we feel are a true reflection of each student's ability and potential. We adopt an honest and evidence-based approach to this process, whereby attainment and progress in Year 12 is the main indicator of future performance. The teacher or teachers of each subject decide the predicted grades for their students, as they know their own students best.

The result of the Year 12 mock exams will form the 'main' evidence as this is the closest to a 'real' exam in terms of length, content and skills assessed and conditions for preparing for, and sitting the exam. It is therefore the best indicator of what a student is likely to achieve.

Other factors considered *may* include some of the following, especially where these suggest the mock exam grade is not a true reflection:

- Any exceptional extenuating circumstances affecting the preparation for, and/or sitting of the mock exam. We will adopt the same approach as would be used for 'real' exams allowing additional consideration where we feel this would likely be granted by JCQ.
- The results of any interim assessments during Year 12.
- General attitude to learning and commitment (as evidenced by contributions made in class, meeting deadlines, attendance and punctuality).
- Performance in homework assignments.
- The student's drive and passion for the subject (as evidenced by wider reading, involvement in extra-curricular activities around the subject etc).
- Professional judgement and experience of making UCAS predictions.

For example, a student who consistently achieves 'C' grades throughout Year 12 in assessments and homework assignments in a particular subject *may* be awarded a predicted grade of a 'C', or indeed a 'B' if they have an excellent work ethic and attitude to learning. It is less likely, however, that such a student would be predicted an 'A' grade, as the evidence would not necessarily support such a prediction.

Teachers will not base their predictions on a student's wishes, what the student 'needs' to get into a particular course, or on students' promises that they will 'work harder next year'. While this affirmation is certainly admirable, it is the case that Year 13 students must work harder than they did in Year 12, simply to *maintain* their grades, due to the increased difficulty of final year content.

How do we ensure all students are treated fairly in this process?

Staff are experienced professionals and carry out this process with integrity. In the first instance, Predicted Grades will be reviewed for all students, in all subjects by the Sixth Form team prior to release. We will query any that look too low *before* they are released to students.

What opportunity will there be to raise predicted grades?

If a student is disappointed with the predicted grade set by staff after the Year 12 mocks, there will be a second review of all predicted grades after the November mock exam series in Year 13. This will be done in the same way as the initial setting of predictions with a scrutiny by the Sixth Form team. **Students will not be permitted to simply request a higher grade in the period between Year 12 mock exam and Year 13 mock exam. Allowing this to happen disadvantages those students who lack the confidence to do so and so all such requests will be ignored.**

For students applying to courses affected by the earlier, 15th October UCAS deadline, i.e. courses at Oxford or Cambridge; all Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary courses the November Year 13 exams come too late. For this reason, we will offer an opportunity to sit a mock exam during Enrichment in late September.

Over-inflated predictions

It is understandable that students and parents may want teachers to over-predict A Level grades, in order that the student may access a particular University course. However, we have a professional and moral responsibility to ensure that the student has realistic expectations with regards to their likely grades, whilst still remaining motivational and aspirational.

The potential consequences of over-predicting A-Level grades can be outlined as follows:

- Students find themselves without a University place when they receive their results, as they achieved what teachers originally predicted, but not the higher grades that were requested. The student must go through the competitive Clearing process, often finally choosing a course that has lower entry requirements than what they actually achieved. This also can lead to students being left with poorer accommodation options.
- Future Whitburn students are affected, as the school's reputation for accurate predictions is diminished. University admission tutors build up a knowledge of the accuracy of a particular school's predictions. Therefore, if the school becomes known for over-predicting, then future applications are put at a disadvantage, as their predicted grades will be brought into question.
- Teachers are asked to go against their professional judgement and honest opinion, which is not moral, nor is it fair to other students who are given an accurate prediction that may be lower than they would like.

Appeals

If a student still feels *after the Year 13 November mock exam* that a particular predicted grade is not a true reflection of their ability or what they are likely to achieve at the end of Year 13, then they may ask for the grade to be increased by providing a letter of appeal to the Head of Sixth Form. This should outline the reasons why they think the predicted grade is not a fair assessment of what they may achieve, as well as a summary of the evidence that supports their view that a higher prediction is warranted. The Head of Sixth Form will then consult the Head of Subject and subject teacher or teachers, following which a final decision will be made as to whether or not the grade should be increased. Please note that the final decision will rest with the Head of Subject.

What happens next?

Sixth Form staff and tutors input the students' predicted grades into the students' UCAS form just prior to it being sent. The application is then checked by the Head of Sixth Form, before finally being sent to UCAS. The student is involved in the final check where students are made aware one final time of the Predicted Grades included on the form.