

**GCSE 2021 STAFF GUIDANCE HANDBOOK**

# Introduction

Following consultation by the DfE and Ofqual, alternative arrangements have put into place for the awarding of grades this summer.

This document outlines the process that schools and colleges have been asked to follow and how this process will be implemented for Little Lever. All staff involved in the process of awarding grades for this summer’s exams will be required to confirm they have read and understood this document and complete the declaration in Annex A.

Whilst there are many differences between 2020 and 2021 process, there is one aspect to highlight more than any other.

**Summer 2020**  - schools and colleges were asked to submit *‘the most likely grade a student would have achieved if they had sat their exams this summer and completed any non-exam assessment’.* This was, in effect, a predicted grade.

**Summer 2021** – teachers *‘should make a holistic judgement of each student’s performance on a range of evidence relating to the subject content that has been delivered by their teacher (either in the classroom or via remote learning) … [the] qualification grade should reflect what a student knows, understands and can do.’* Every *‘exam board will require each school, college or other exam centre to submit a grade for each student, based on an assessment of the standard at which they are performing’.* This year, grades must be based on evidence and not the potential of the candidate.

It is vital that staff understand all the differences to last year’s process and Subject Leaders should explicitly discuss these with their department.

Some parts of this document do not apply to Art and Design which will be wholly marked on portfolio assessment.

A grade needs to be submitted for every entry that has been made for every student. Final grades will be collected on SIMS this year and guidance on this will be sent by MIS and SCO in due course.

For GCSE English language and GCSE modern foreign languages teachers should determine and submit a separate grade for the endorsement based on the work that has been completed towards the endorsement.

All grades need to be submitted to exam boards by 18 June 2021 at the latest.

**Results will be published on:**

**Thursday 12 August 2021**

# Overview of the process

This section contains an overview of how the plan will be implemented. Detailed guidance follows in subsequent sections.

# Evidence base

All staff must follow the Little Lever GCSE 2021 Policy regarding evidence and authentication of evidence. Whilst there is flexibility in what can be used as evidence, the criteria has been laid out by Ofqual. These are:

1. *Student work produced in response to assessment materials provided by the exam board, including groups of questions, past papers or similar materials such as practice or sample papers.*
2. *Non-exam assessment (NEA) work (often referred to as coursework), even if this has not been fully completed.*
3. *Student work produced in centre-devised tasks that reflect the specification, that follow the same format as exam board materials and have been marked in a way that reflects exam board mark schemes. This can include substantial class or homework (including those that took place during remote learning), internal tests taken by pupils and mock exams taken over the course of study.*
4. *Records of a student’s capability and performance over the course of study in performance-based subjects such as music, drama and PE.*
5. *Records of each student’s progress and performance over the course of study.*

**Curriculum and Assessment Plans**

Subject Leaders will have autonomy and flexibility to select an assessment method that will best suit the needs and assessment criteria for each of their subjects. For example Subject Leaders may want to continue with their planned STEP assessment plan or introduce more frequent assessments over the next 6 weeks. Whilst there is a level of flexibility in what assessments can be used, it is sensible to use either past papers (or part thereof) or the exam materials which will be produced by exam boards. These will most accurately reflect the exam specification and style of assessment with mark schemes and prior attainment data available from exam boards. Teachers and Subject Leaders should be mindful that students may have access to past papers and their mark schemes and should ensure a variety is set up and this is taken into account when preparing the final assessment (Mock 2).

**It is important to remember that we should only assess students on the curriculum content we have taught. Therefore you will need to outline your curriculum and assessment plan from 1st April to 28th May.**

If as a Subject Leader you feel more frequent assessments would allow students to show their best work then please feel free to select a strategy of assessment that will allow you to have the evidence that will best show the students’ capabilities.

When creating assessments Subject Leaders should ensure they are representative of the Assessment Objective distribution when compared to a past paper (for example, if AO1 typically made up 20% of a paper, then assessment made over the coming months should broadly reflect this…. Use your assessments intelligently… spread the assessment objectives out over the next few weeks and use the assessment pieces to target the key elements of your curriculum that has been taught.

When considering the best form of assessment for each subject, Subject Leaders should aim to use consistent sources of evidence for a class or cohort that relate closely to the specification requirements i.e. past examination questions. Whilst this is not mandatory, it clearly helps with moderation of work and assigning grades.

Students should be given notice of the assessments and further details of what will be involved. This will clearly vary from subject to subject but examples could include:

* A list of topics being assessed
* The paper being assessed (e.g. a non-calculator assessment in GCSE maths or paper 1)
* Broad outlines of the topic(s) being assessed (e.g. Macbeth)

For maths, science and modern foreign languages where assessments can be tiered, it is vital that Subject Leaders ensure pupils are given assessment materials that allow them to access the range of grades that they are working at or towards.

As noted above, where it is practicably possible, students within a cohort should take the same assessment, ideally at the same time. This has obvious advantages to the standardisation process. However, Subject Leaders should give careful thought in ensuring the assessment allows students to show their best work and that the range of evidence gathered allows students to demonstrate the standard we expect of them. Therefore, differentiating the assessment based on content coverage may allow students to show their best work.

Students should get feedback on their assessment so they know how to improve and also be provided with sufficient revision material, independent learning packs, etc. over the holidays to help them prepare for their assessments.

Intervention planners should be updated and any interventions sent to SCO to collate the central intervention calendar. This will be communicated to all students via EDGE time and SLT in the morning huddle each day/week.

Most assessments will take place in classrooms but there will be an opportunity for final assessments just before the summer half term to take place in exam venues (subject to public health considerations). SCO will collate a broad outline of assessment details in due course to ensure they are as reasonably spread out as possible so as to not overload pupils.

Subject Leaders should give consideration to the other forms of evidence that can be used to form a judgement as some students (through no fault of their own) may not be able to attend every planned assessment. Therefore, it would be sensible over the coming weeks for students to have the opportunity for some substantial classwork and/or homework that reflects the specification, that follows the same format as exam board materials and has been marked in a way that reflects exam board mark schemes… i.e. your in class assessments are exam questions.

## What evidence can be used

All evidence over the course of study can be used as evidence as long as teachers are confident that the work is the students own. This could include work completed by students as a part of home learning, whether in lockdown or if students have had to isolate.

**All evidence must be based on what students have been taught**. Evidence based on topics or content that students have not been taught should not be used. This could include remote teaching during lockdown. If basing assessments on material taught remotely, teachers and Subject Leaders should be confident that every student has had the opportunity to access this learning and they have been assessed on this adequately to check for understanding. Teachers must be able to authenticate this work as the student’s own work.

* *Teachers making judgements will have regard to the Ofqual Head of Centre guidance on recommended evidence, and further guidance provided by awarding organisations.*
* *All candidate evidence used to determine teacher assessed grades, and associated documentation, will be retained and made available for the purposes of external quality assurance and appeals.*
* *We will be using student work produced in response to assessment materials provided by our awarding organisation(s), including groups of questions, past papers or similar materials such as practice or sample papers.*
* *We will use non-exam assessment work (often referred to as coursework), even if this has not been fully completed.*
* *We will use student work produced in centre-devised tasks that reflect the specification, that follow the same format as awarding organisation materials, and have been marked in a way that reflects awarding organisation mark schemes.*
* *We will use substantial class or homework (including work that took place during remote learning).*
* *We will use internal tests taken by pupils.*
* *We will use mock exams taken over the course of study.*
* *We will use records of a student’s capability and performance over the course of study in performance-based subjects such as music, drama and PE.*

## Arriving at a grade

Based on the evidence that is available, every teacher will need to reach a final grade for every pupil they are assessing. This must be a firm grade e.g. 9,8,7,6 etc. - 5a, 6c, 7b will not be permissible.

When arriving at a final grade, teachers must take into account the evidence available. It is envisaged that for most pupils, the assessments that will be taken will be used as a primary evidence base for arriving at the final grade. Where there are NEA elements to a course or departments have records of a student’s capability and performance over the course of study in performance-based subjects, the relative weighting given to that piece of work should be broadly in line with the relative weighting had exams run as normal.

There may be instances when the evidence from the assessments does not reflect the best grade a student could have achieved. For example, they (or their teacher) may have had to isolate just prior to the assessment or they suffered a bereavement prior to the assessment. In instances such as this, teachers should use their professional judgement and can assign a greater emphasis on a particular assessment or piece of work if they feel that is was a more representative of what a student knows, can do and understands.

**Ultimately, the judgement is holistic and that the final grade submitted represents a reasonable exercise of academic judgement based on the evidence available on what pupils have been taught.**

Teachers should be mindful that any assessment results (mark, grade, band, etc.) are fed back to students carefully. Whilst the assessment results may give the student an indication of the grade they are performing at, it will not necessarily be the grade that is finally submitted.

## Keeping evidence (Evidence Files)

**It is vital that all evidence that is used to arrive at the final grade for each subject is kept securely. In addition to sampling at random, it will be needed if a student chooses to appeal their grade.**

All teachers will be provided with a folder for each student that has been entered for an exam in their class. These folders will also have the student’s candidate number written on them. It is vital that all assessments used over the coming weeks are stored safely in the folder. In addition, if there is any other evidence that could be used to contribute to the evidence base (e.g. substantial classwork/homework as noted above), it should also be stored securely in these folders. If students already have work that could be added to the folders that would meet the criteria (e.g. essays written from the Autumn term), then it should be added to the evidence base and kept in the folders.

It is vital that these are kept safely in subject offices and not left lying around. Once all data has been submitted, these folders will be collected and stored centrally as they may be needed for the appeals process or external quality assurance process. This evidence should be readily available to JCQ and exam board inspections.

# Making objective judgements

In these unprecedented circumstances, schools and colleges are best placed to judge the performance of their students. However, it is important to recognise there are concerns about the potential for some students to be disadvantaged by this approach. It is therefore vital that we take the following into account to ensure the process is as fair as possible.

## Objectivity in grading decisions

Each teacher assessed grade should be a professional judgement, balancing different sources of evidence and data. They should take account of existing records and evidence, as well as new evidence generated in the coming months, to demonstrate a student’s knowledge, skills and abilities in relation to the subject content that they have been taught. Similarly, judgements should not be affected by a student’s behaviour (both good and poor), character, appearance or social background, or the performance of their siblings.

Other factors should also not affect this judgement, including characteristics protected under equalities legislation such as a student’s sex, race, religion/belief, disability status, gender reassignment or sexual orientation.

## Unconscious effects on objectivity

All staff should ensure they are aware of whether they may have any preconceptions about each student’s performance and whether their perception of the evidence might be affected by any irrelevant factors. These could be:

* **confirmation bias**, for example noticing only evidence about a student that fits with pre-existing views about them
* **masking or halo effects**, for example where a particular view about an aspect of a student hides, or overly accentuates, their actual knowledge, skills and abilities
* **recency effects**, for example giving undue weight to the most recent interaction with a student or the most recent piece of work done by a student
* **primacy effects**, for example giving undue weight to ‘first impressions’ of a student
* **selective perceptions**, for example giving undue weight to a student’s performance on a particular part of the content of the specification rather than considering performance across all the material that they have been taught
* **contrast effects**, for example over-estimating a student’s likely performance having first considered a large number of students who are all at a much lower standard
* **outlier effects**, for example, under-estimating a student’s performance if it is significantly out of line with (above or below) other students in that centre, for example some students may have performed less well during periods of remote learning

## Using prior data to check objectivity of assessments

**Our intake is broadly stable and the achievement of the school has rapidly improved and been high over recent years. Therefore, it is very likely that our grade profile will be similar to the previous year.**

We will identify and use these trends over previous years to check whether our proposed teacher assessed grades for this summer might have been influenced by preconceptions or irrelevant factors. Where such trends are identified, we will investigate them further while also being mindful that the context needs to be taken into account. For example, significant personnel changes may mean that effects in previous years may not be assumed to carry forward, or may reduce the benefits of aggregating data between different years. These will be flagged and teachers and Subject Leaders will be challenged regarding the Teacher Assessed grade that has been awarded and will be asked to justify their decision. This justification, if valid, will kept on record as part of the student’s evidence file.

Whilst data from previous years can provide a useful reference point by looking at overall grading patterns by student group to help us make objective judgements, it must not be used in isolation to determine individual grades. Ultimately, it is important that each student's grade is determined by the specific performance of that student in relation to the relevant qualification whist taking into account the above.

## Precautions to take against objectivity bias

In addition to the use of prior data, departments will implement a range of the following strategies depending on the time available.

* Assessments that take place over the next few weeks and months will be marked in one of two ways:
	+ Blind marked – students will not put their name on the assessment so they cannot be identified. Only candidate numbers should be written on the assessments
	+ They will be marked by someone who is not their class teacher (where possible)
* When marking papers, teachers should make every effort to mark question by question. This will ensure the highest level of consistency in marking.

Depending on the assessment and subject, additional precautions may be put into place as well.

**Special Consideration - GCSE Grades 2021**

The usual process of centres submitting special consideration applications to awarding organisations for qualifications will not apply this summer.

As the range of evidence is flexible and can be tailored to an individual student according to coverage of the specification, then instances of special consideration should be limited. Centres should be able to select work completed by a student where they were unaffected by adverse circumstances.

Where this is not possible and a temporary illness, a temporary injury or some other event outside of the student’s control may have affected their performance in assessments which will be used to determine a grade, teachers should take this into account and document how they have done so.

Special consideration cannot be applied due to lost teaching and learning. This can be addressed through the flexibility of the range of evidence centres may use to determine students’ grades.

Students should only be assessed on the content of the specification covered.

Centres must be satisfied that the issue or event has had, or is reasonably likely to have had, a material effect on a student’s ability to demonstrate his or her normal level of attainment in an assessment.

Centres must record how they determined the impact of the misfortune. Students must be reminded to raise any mitigating circumstances which warrant special consideration.

**It is important that students raise these issues as soon as possible, ideally at the time of the assessment and prior to the submission of the teacher assessed grade.**

# Quality assurance process

There are two parts to the quality assurance process.

## Internal quality assurance

It is vital that every department has in place an effective internal moderation process. This is to ensure that the grading of each individual piece of work is a fair as possible. When assessments take place over the next few weeks and months, the following should be carried out as a minimum.

1. All teachers are familiar with the use of mark schemes for past papers or the assessment materials being used. If additional support or guidance is needed, training will need to take place in advance of assessments to ensure all final marks are within an acceptable level of tolerance.
2. Once assessments have been completed, internal moderation should take place. At the very least, this should involve 3 – 5 pieces which should include the highest and the lowest pieces of work. Subject Leaders should be confident that the mark/grade/band etc. assigned to the work is as fair and consistent as possible and reflect the grade the pupils is working at. In the exam support materials to be published by exam boards, grade descriptors are expected.

The details outlined above should be followed as a minimum and Subject Leaders should ensure sufficient training is provided to all staff (including refresher training for experienced members and previous examiners) so that the process is as fair as reasonably possible.

## External quality assurance

**Exam boards will be required to ensure that every centre has in place an internal quality assurance approach. It will be focussed on making sure that the process and evidence used by centres to determine a grade is reasonable; it will not involve second-guessing teachers’ judgements.**

**Our GCSE 2021 Centre policy must be read and understood by all staff. A signature from all staff will be required to show that they have read and fully understand the policy.**

**In addition, exam boards will carry out more detailed checks of a sample of centres, reviewing the evidence for one or more subjects**.

# Sharing Data

Staff **MUST NOT**, **UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCE,** share the final teacher assessed grade with students, their parents/carers or any other individuals outside the centre. Any breach of this will be considered misconduct by the school and disciplinary action may follow.

We must also guard against the possibility of accidental sharing via misdirected emails, etc. All data (including the evidence base collected) must be kept secure at all times with adequate precautions in place.

**Malpractice - GCSE Grades 2021**

Any incident of suspected malpractice in the conduct of GCSE examination within Little Lever School is investigated and reported in accordance with the guidance contained within the Suspected Malpractice: Policies and Procedures document.

The decision to not go ahead with exams in Summer 2021 means staff are required to submit grades that have been determined in line with the guidance in this handbook.

Because of this, the causes and drivers for malpractice will be different to those in a normal examination series. However, malpractice can still occur through genuine error or intent, particularly around the determination of grades if staff fail to appropriately adhere to the guidance in determining grades and some students might attempt to gain an unfair advantage.

Below are some examples of malpractice concerns specific to the 2021 GCSE Summer Series. Please note that the list is not exhaustive and there may be other instances of potential malpractice which will require investigation.

Centres/centre staff

Awarding organisations will investigate credible allegations of malpractice or issues reported from our monitoring processes that raise concerns about a failure to follow published requirements for determining grades. Examples include:

• Exam entries are created for students who had not studied the course of entry or had not intended to enter for June 2021.

• Grades created for students who have not been taught sufficient content to provide the basis for that grade.

• A teacher deliberately and inappropriately disregarding the centre’s published policy when determining grades.

• A teacher fabricating evidence of candidate performance to support an inflated grade.

• A teacher deliberately providing inappropriate levels of support before or during an assessment, including deliberate disclosure of mark schemes and assessment materials, to support an inflated grade.

• A teacher intentionally submitting inflated grades.

• A failure to retain evidence used in the determination of grades in accordance with the JCQ Grading guidance.

• A systemic failure to follow the centre’s policy in relation to the application of Access Arrangements or Special Consideration arrangements for students in relation to assessments used to determine grades.

• A failure to take reasonable steps to authenticate student work.

• A failure to appropriately manage Conflicts of Interest (COIs) within a centre.

• A Head of Centre’s failure to submit the required declaration when submitting their grades.

 • Grades being released to students (or their parents/carers) before the issue of results

• Failure to cooperate with an awarding body’s quality assurance, appeal or investigation processes.

• Failure to conduct a centre review or submit an appeal when requested to do so by a student.

Students

It is possible that some students may attempt to influence their teachers’ judgements about their grades.

Students might attempt to gain an unfair advantage during the centre’s process by, for example, submitting fabricated evidence or plagiarised work. Such incidents would constitute malpractice.

Students, or individuals acting on behalf of a student, such as parents/carers, might also try to influence grade decisions by applying pressure to centres or their staff. If this is the case, staff should retain clear and reliable records of the circumstances and the steps taken, and that students are made aware of the outcome. However, if a student continues to inappropriately attempt to pressure staff then the member of staff should inform their line manager in order that appropriate steps can be taken.

# Internal sign-off within the centre

There are two stages to this process.

## Department sign-off

Each grade for a subject must be signed off by at least 2 teachers in that subject, one of whom should be the Subject Leader. In the case of a sole teacher of a subject, or if only one is available, the Line Manager will act as the second signatory. SCO will check for conflict(s) of interest (e.g. a member of staff having a relative they may be involved in assessing etc…). If such cases are identified, additional control measures will be put into place by SCO.

## Head of centre sign-off

DMC as Head of centre is required to confirm that the grades are a true representation of student performance. The following declaration must be submitted with the grades.

‘I confirm that:

* these grades have been checked for accuracy, reviewed by a second member of staff and are accurate and represent the professional judgements made by my staff
* entries were appropriate for each candidate in that students entered were those already studying the course, and each candidate has no more than one entry per subject
* my centre has met the requirements set out by exam boards/JCQ for internal quality assurance
* I am satisfied that each student’s grade is based on an appropriately broad range of evidence, and is their own work
* exam board requirements have been met for any private candidates
* access arrangements and reasonable adjustments were provided with appropriate input from the SENCo and other specialists (and where they were not, that has been taken into account)
* I and my staff have taken note of the guidance from exam boards about minimising bias, and I am confident that the judgements are fair
* all relevant student evidence and records are available for inspection, as necessary’

# Appeals

* All staff involved have been made aware of the arrangements for, and the requirements of, appeals in Summer 2021, as set out in the **JCQ Guidance Policy**.
* Internal arrangements will be in place for the swift and effective handling of Centre Reviews in compliance with the requirements.
* All necessary staff have been briefed on the process for, and timing of, such reviews, and will be available to ensure their prompt and efficient handling.
* Leaners have been appropriately guided as to the necessary stages of appeal.
* Arrangements will be in place for the timely submission of appeals to awarding organisations, including any priority appeals, for example those on which university places depend.
* Arrangements will be in place to obtain the written consent of students to the initiation of appeals, and to record their awareness that grades may go down as well as up on appeal.
* Appropriate information on the appeals process will be provided to parents/carers.

# GCSE Grades 2021 - Staff Declaration Form

I confirm the following for all pupils that I teach who were due to sit their GCSE or vocational exam this year.

1. **I have read and understood this guidance and have asked any necessary questions or sought clarification.**
2. **I have read and understood the Little Lever GCSE 2021 Centre Policy. I understand my responsibilities and I have asked any necessary questions or sought clarification.**
3. The grade that I have provided, based on all the available evidence, is an accurate and fair reflection of the evidence of the student’s performance.
4. I have undertaken, to the best of my ability, to grade as objectively as possible taking into account this guidance and that I have been involved in moderation of grades as directed by my Subject Leader.
5. I have not been involved in the grading of work of a pupil where a conflict of interest may arise (e.g. a relative)
6. I agree not to share, under any circumstances, the centre assessment grade or ranking to any pupil, parent or anyone outside Little Lever School. Within the school, I will only share the evidence and grade within my department as directed by my Subject Leader.
7. I agree to take adequate precautions to ensure any evidence used when making judgement is kept secure at all times and retained as directed by my Subject Leader or Line Manager.
8. Other than the evidence that is required to be retained as a part of this process, I will permanently delete or destroy any other evidence (in any format that I have) when requested to do so by my Subject Leader or Line Manager.
9. **I understand that the wilful or negligent sharing of the centre assessment grade or ranking will be considered (gross) misconduct and may lead to disciplinary action**.
10. To ensure consistency in the application of Special Consideration, I have read and understood the document ‘JCQ - A guide to the special consideration process, with effect from 1 September 2021.’
11. I have read and understood the school guidance malpractice and maladministration and the specific challenge of delivery in summer 2021. I fully understand the possible consequences of malpractice and maladministration to pupils, staff and the school.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_