



**South Manchester
Learning Trust**

Personal Growth | Academic Excellence

Altrincham College

Exam Centre Policy

Policy Date: April 2021

Approved by: Governors

Date: May 2021

Date of next review: April 2022

Contents (if applicable)

Background

Following guidance from the JCQ (Summer 2021) regarding Centre Assessed (or 'Teacher Assessed') Grades (CAGs/TAGs), every exam centre is required to create a Centre Policy that reflects its individual circumstances. Centres must understand and actively implement the policy adopted.

This policy document is for use by staff at Altrincham College (part of the South Manchester Learning Trust) in assessing grades for the Summer exams (2021): for GCSE and A-Levels (Key Stage 4 and 5) examinations.

Principles

The purpose of this policy is:

- To ensure that teacher assessed grades (TAGs) are determined fairly, consistently, free from bias and effectively within and across departments.
- To ensure the operation of effective processes with clear guidelines and support for staff.
- To support our centre in meeting its obligations in relation to equality legislation.
- To ensure our centre meets all requirements set out by the Department of Education, Ofqual, the JCQ and awarding organisations for Summer 2021 qualifications.

Aims

- To ensure that all Altrincham College staff involved in the processes clearly understand their roles and responsibilities.
- To support teachers to take evidence-based decisions in line with Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) guidance.
- To ensure the consideration of historical centre data in the process and the appropriate decision making in respect of teacher assessed grades.
- To support a high standard of internal quality assurance in the allocation of teacher assessed grades.
- To ensure the process for communicating to candidates and their parents/carers how they will be assessed is clear, in order to give confidence.

Practice (see Appendix 1 Head of Department Declaration)

Training and Support

- Teachers involved in determining grades in our centre will attend any centre-based training to help achieve consistency and fairness to all students.
- Teachers will engage fully with all training and support provided by the JCQ and the awarding organisations.
- Altrincham College will provide mentoring from experienced teachers to those less familiar with assessment including those who are recently qualified teachers, newly qualified or otherwise inexperienced.
- We will put in place additional internal reviews of TAGs for these less experienced staff, as appropriate.

Evidence (see appendix 2 – Approved Student Record)

Use of Evidence

- 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 TAGs, and associated documentation, will be retained and made available for the purposes of external quality assurance and appeals.

Types of Evidence - student work used as evidence to establish TAGs will include:

- 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.
- Non-exam assessment work (often referred to as “coursework”), even if this has not been fully completed.
- Student work produced in centre-devised tasks that reflect the specification, follow the same format as awarding organisation materials, and have been marked in a way that reflects awarding organisation mark schemes.
- Substantial class or homework (including work that took place during remote learning).
- Internal tests.
- Mock exams taken over the course of study.
- Records of a student’s capability and performance over the course of study in performance-based subjects (for example, music, drama and PE).

Additional Assessment Materials – we will use additional assessment materials to:

- give students the opportunity to show what they know, understand or can do in an area of content that has been taught but not yet assessed
- to give students an opportunity to show improvement; for example, to validate or replace an existing piece of evidence
- to support consistency of judgement between teachers or classes by giving everyone the same task to complete.

We will combine and/or remove elements of assessment questions if required; for example, when a multi-part question includes an element of the specification that hasn’t been taught.

Appropriateness of Evidence / Balance of Evidence – as a Centre we will:

- Consider the level of control under which an assessment was completed; for example, whether the evidence was produced under high control and under supervision or at home.
- Ensure we are able to authenticate the work as the student’s own, especially where that work was not completed in school.
- Consider the limitations of assessing a student’s performance when using assessments completed more than once, or drafted and redrafted, where this is not a skill being assessed.
- Consider the specification and assessment objective coverage of the assessment.
- Consider the depth and breadth of knowledge, understanding and skills assessed, especially higher order skills, within individual assessments.

Recording Decisions and Retention of Evidence / Data – as a Centre we will:

- Ensure that teachers and Heads of Departments maintain records that show how the teacher assessed grades process operated, including the rationale for decisions in relation to individual marks/grades.
- Ensure that evidence is maintained across a variety of tasks, to develop a holistic view of each student's demonstrated knowledge, understanding and skills in the areas of content taught.
- Put in place recording requirements for the various stages of the process, to ensure the accurate and secure retention of the evidence used to make decisions.
- Comply with our obligations regarding data protection/GDPR legislation.
- Ensure that the TAGs accurately reflect the evidence submitted.
- Ensure that evidence is retained electronically, or on paper, in a secure centre-based system which can be readily shared with our awarding organisation(s).

Confidentiality

Altrincham College will ensure measures are put in place to protect the confidentiality of the TAGs determined for our students, and will make students aware of the range of evidence on which TAGs will be based. Therefore:

- All staff involved have been made aware of the need to maintain the confidentiality of TAGs.
- All teaching staff have been briefed on the requirement to share details of the range of evidence on which students' grades will be based, while ensuring that details of the final grades remain confidential.
- Relevant details from this Policy, including requirements around sharing details of evidence and the confidentiality requirements, have been shared with parents/carers.

Authenticating Evidence (see Appendix 3 – Student Plagiarism Declaration)

Teachers involved in assessing TAGs must be confident in the authenticity of evidence; as a centre we must put in place processes for dealing with cases where evidence is not thought to be authentic.

Altrincham College will therefore:

- Establish robust mechanisms, which will include plagiarism declaration.
- Processes will be put in place to ensure that teachers are confident that work used as evidence is the students' own and that no inappropriate levels of support have been given to students to complete it, either within school or with external tutors.

It is understood that awarding organisations will investigate instances where it appears evidence is not authentic; Altrincham College will therefore follow all guidance provided by awarding organisations to support these determinations of authenticity.

Malpractice

Altrincham College has put in place measures to prevent malpractice, and processes to deal with any cases of malpractice, in accordance with the awarding organisation(s)' requirements:

- Altrincham College's policies regarding malpractice, maladministration and conflicts of interest have been reviewed to ensure they address the specific challenges of delivery in Summer 2021.
- All staff involved in determining TAGs have been made aware of these policies, and have received training in them as necessary.
- All staff involved have been made aware of the specific types of malpractice which may affect the Summer 2021 series including:

- breaches of internal security
- deception
- improper assistance to students
- failure to appropriately authenticate students' work
- over direction of students in preparation for common assessments
- allegations that submitted grades are not supported by evidence
- entry of students who were not originally intending to certificate a grade in the Summer 2021 series
- failure to engage as requested with awarding organisations during the External Quality Assurance and appeal stages
- failure to keep appropriate records of decisions made and TAGs.

Staff involved in determining TAGs will be made aware of the consequences of malpractice or maladministration. Consequences include the risk of a delay to students receiving their grades and the potential removal of centre status.

Staff will be referred to the JCQ guidance: [JCQ Suspected Malpractice: Policies and Procedures](#).

Conflicts of Interest (see Appendix 4 – Staff Conflict of Interest)

Altrincham College will put in place measures to address potential conflicts of interest, and to respond to such allegations if they are made. We will therefore:

- Ensure that all staff involved in the determination of grades declare any conflict of interest; for example, relationships with students, to our Head of Centre for further consideration, in order to protect the integrity of assessments.
- Take appropriate action (via the Head of Centre) to manage any conflicts of interest arising with centre staff in accordance with the JCQ documents - [General Regulations for Approved Centres, 1 September 2020 to 31 August 2021](#).
- Carefully consider the need, if required, to separate duties and personnel to ensure fairness in later process reviews and appeals.

Awarding Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs) (see Appendix 5 – Quality Assurance and Staff Training Register)

Our teachers will:

- determine grades based on evidence which is commensurate with the standard at which a student is performing, i.e. their demonstrated knowledge, understanding and skills across the content of the course they have been taught
- record how the evidence was used to arrive at a fair and objective grade, which is free from bias
- produce an Assessment Record for each subject cohort and will share this with their Head of Department; any necessary variations for individual students will also be shared.

Quality Assuring Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs) - Internal Processes

Altrincham College will make every effort to quality assure TAGs, to ensure consistency, fairness and objectivity of decisions. Our internal standardisation process will help to ensure that there are different perspectives to the QA (quality assurance) process.

As a Centre, we will:

- Ensure that all teachers involved in deriving TAGs read and understand this policy document.
- Ensure that our centre carries out an internal standardisation process in subjects where there is more than one teacher and/or class in the department.
- Ensure that all teachers are provided with training and support to ensure they take a consistent approach to:
 - arriving at teacher assessed grades
 - marking evidence
 - reaching a holistic grading decision
 - applying the use of grading support and documentation.
- Conduct internal standardisation across all grades.
- Ensure that the Assessment Record will form the basis of internal standardisation and discussions across the teaching body, to agree the awarding of TAGs.
- Review and reflect, where necessary, on individual grading decisions, to ensure alignment with the standards as outlined by our awarding organisation(s).
- Amend individual grade decisions, where appropriate, to ensure alignment with the standards as outlined by our awarding organisation(s).
- Review grades where there is only one teacher involved in marking assessments and determining grades; the output of this activity will be reviewed by an appropriate member of staff within the centre. At Altrincham College, this will be a member of the Senior Leadership Team.
- We will consider the range of evidence for students of different protected characteristics that are included in our internal standardisation, in accordance with equality legislation.
- Only use evidence of the content which has been taught and assessed for each student.

Comparing TAGs with previous cohorts – as part of the quality assurance process, TAGs will be compared with previous cohorts of students at Altrincham College taking the same qualification.

The following factors will be taken into account in this comparison:

- the grades awarded to our students in past June series in which exams took place (e.g. 2017 - 2019)
- the size of our cohort from year to year
- the stability of Altrincham College's overall grade outcomes from year to year
- subject and centre level variation in our outcomes

We will omit from the historical data subjects we no longer offer at KS4/5.

A succinct narrative on the outcomes of the review against historic data will be prepared which, in the event of significant divergence from the qualifications-levels profiles attained in previous examined years, will address the reasons for this divergence. This commentary will be available for subsequent review during the QA process.

Should TAGs for Summer 2021 be viewed as overly lenient, or harsh, compared to results in previous years, we will:

- compile historical data giving appropriate regard to potential mixtures of A*-G and 9-1 grades in GCSEs and, where required, use the Ofqual guidance to convert legacy grades into the new 9 to 1 scale
- include grades from international GCSEs (e.g. in mathematics) because we have previously offered these.

- bring together other data sources that will help to quality assure the grades we intend to award in 2021.

Objectivity – to ensure the objectivity of decisions regarding TAGs

Staff will:

- fulfil their duties and responsibilities in relation to relevant equality and disability legislation.

Senior Leadership, Heads of Department and Head of Centre will consider:

- sources of unfairness and bias (situations/contexts, difficulty, presentation and format, language, conditions for assessment, marker preconceptions)
- how to minimise bias in questions and marking and hidden forms of bias)
- bias in teacher assessed grades.

All staff involved with determining TAGs will be made aware that:

- unconscious bias can skew judgements
- the evidence presented should be valued for its own merit as an indication of performance and attainment
- TAGs should not be influenced by candidates' positive or challenging personal circumstances, character, behaviour, appearance, socio-economic background, or protected characteristics
- unconscious bias is more likely to occur when quick opinions are formed.

Quality Assuring Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs) – External Processes

Altrincham College has put in place arrangements to ensure the relevant documentation and assessment evidence can be provided, in a timely manner, for the purposes of external quality assurance sampling, and that staff can be made available to respond to enquiries:

- All staff involved have been made aware of the awarding organisation requirements for External Quality Assurance as set out in the **JCQ Guidance**.
- All necessary records of decision-making in relation to determining grades will be properly kept and made available for review as required.
- All student evidence on which decisions regarding the determination of grades will be retained and made available for review as required.
- In instances where student evidence used to decide TAGs is not available; for example, where the material has previously been returned to students and cannot now be retrieved, this will be clearly recorded on the appropriate documentation.
- All staff involved have been briefed on the possibility of interaction with awarding organisations during the different stages of the External Quality Assurance process and can respond promptly and fully to enquiries, including attendance at “virtual visits”, should this prove necessary.
- Arrangements are in place to respond fully and promptly to any additional requirements/reviews that may be identified as a result of the External Quality Assurance process.
- All staff involved have been made aware that a failure to respond fully and effectively to such additional requirements may result in further action by the awarding organisations, including the withholding of results.
- In the event of a significant divergence of results in comparison to previous cohorts, narrative support will be co-signed by the Headteacher and CEO of the Trust.

Access Arrangements (See Appendix 6 – SEN Student Access Proforma)

With respect to those students with access arrangements, and those who have requested special consideration / mitigating circumstances, Altrincham College will use the following guidelines:

- Where students have access arrangements or reasonable adjustments (for example, a reader or scribe) in place, we will make every effort to ensure that these arrangements are in place when assessments are being taken.
- Where an assessment has taken place without an agreed reasonable adjustment or access arrangement, we will remove that assessment from the basket of evidence and alternative evidence from the student(s) will be obtained.
- Where illness or other personal circumstances might have affected performance in assessments used in determining a student's standard of performance, we will take account of this when making judgements.
- We will record, as part of the Assessment Record, how we have incorporated any necessary variations to take account of the impact of illness or personal circumstances on the performance of individual students in assessments.

To ensure consistency in the application of Special Consideration, we will ensure all teachers have read and understood the document: [JCQ – A guide to the special consideration process, with effect from 1 September 2020](#)

Results (see Appendix 7 – Results Day Procedure)

Altrincham College has made arrangements for the distribution of exam results to students, and the provision of appropriate advice and guidance to students following their results:

- All staff involved have been made aware of the specific arrangements for the issue of results in Summer 2021, including the issuing of A-Level and GCSE results in the same week.
- Arrangements will be made to enable the efficient receipt and release of results to our students, including ensuring the necessary staff (for example, the Exam Officer and support staff) are on site.
- Arrangements will be in place for the provision of all necessary advice, guidance and support (including pastoral support) to students on receipt of their results.
- Such guidance will include advice on the appeals process in place in 2021 (see below).
- Appropriate staff will be available to respond promptly to any requests for information from awarding organisations; for example, regarding missing or incomplete results, to enable such issues to be swiftly resolved.
- Parents/Carers have been made aware of arrangements for results days.

Appeals (see Appendix 8 Student, Parent and Guardian Appeals Process & Guidance)

Should students appeal TAGs, these appeals must be handled swiftly and effectively, in line with JCQ requirements. Should a student appeal one or more TAGs, these will be handled via a Centre Review.

Altrincham College has therefore made the following arrangements:

- 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**.
- 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, Centre Reviews, and will be available to ensure their prompt and efficient handling.
- Students have been appropriately guided as to the 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, on appeal, grades may go down as well as up.
- Appropriate information on the appeals process will be provided to parents/carers.

Roles and responsibilities

Headteacher ('Head of Centre') will:

- will be responsible for approving our policy for determining teacher assessed grades
- has overall responsibility for Altrincham College as an examinations centre and will ensure that clear roles and responsibilities of all staff are defined
- will confirm that teacher assessed grade decisions represent the academic judgement made by teachers and that the checks in place ensure these align with the guidance on standards provided by awarding organisations
- will ensure a robust internal quality assurance process has been produced and signed-off in advance of results being submitted.

Senior Leadership and Heads of Department will:

- provide training and support to other Altrincham College staff
- support the Head of Centre in the quality assurance of the final teacher assessed grades
- ensure an effective approach within and across departments and authenticating the preliminary outcome from single teacher subjects
- be responsible for ensuring staff have a clear understanding of the internal and external quality assurance processes and their role within these processes
- ensure that all teachers within their department make consistent judgements about student evidence in deriving a grade
- ensure all staff conduct assessments under the appropriate levels of control with reference to guidance provided by the JCQ
- ensure teachers have the information required to make accurate and fair judgments
- ensure that a Head of Department Checklist is completed for each qualification they are submitting.

Teaching Staff / Specialist Teachers / SEND staff will:

- ensure they conduct assessments under our centre's appropriate levels of control and have sufficient evidence, in line with this policy and guidance from the JCQ, to provide teacher assessed grades for each student they have entered for a qualification
- ensure that the TAG they assign to each student is a fair, valid and reliable reflection of the assessed evidence available for that student
- make judgements based on what each student has been taught and what they have been assessed on, as outlined in the section on grading in the main JCQ guidance
- produce an Assessment Record for each subject cohort, which includes the nature of the assessment evidence being used, the level of control for assessments considered, and any other evidence which explains the determination of the final TAGs; any necessary variations for individual students will also be recorded

- securely store and be able to retrieve sufficient evidence to justify their decisions.

The Examinations Officer will:

- be responsible for the administration of our final teacher assessed grades and for managing the post-results services.

Post-holders for the Summer exams 2021:

Headteacher / Head of Centre: Ms K Earle

Senior Leadership Team: Mr D Moroney, Mr A Brennan, Ms K Tovey,
Mr A Eastwood, Miss S Diffley, Mrs D Taylor,
Mr A Keegan

SENDCo: Mrs A Noonan

Examinations Officer: Mr P Higgins

Monitoring and evaluation

The Policy document has been forward for JCQ overview before the deadline date 30/4/2021 and formally adopted following their approval.

The terms of the Policy will be approved by the JCQ and the Altrincham College Board of Governors.

The college will operate within the timeframes indicated by the JCQ and the relevant exam boards in all matters relating to Summer 2021 exams.

The following Appendices documents support the Exam Centre Policy.



**South Manchester
Learning Trust**

Personal Growth | Academic Excellence

Appendices for Altrincham College Exam Centre Policy

Appendix 1: Head of Department Declaration

Appendix 2: Approved Student Record Proforma

Appendix 3: Student Plagiarism Declaration

Appendix 4: Staff Conflict of Interest Proforma

Appendix 5: Exam Board Quality Assurance and Staff Training Register

Appendix 6: SEN Student Access Proforma

Appendix 7: Results Day Procedures

Appendix 8: Student, Parent and Guardian Appeals Process & Guidance