

Awarding for Qualifications Summer 2020 – Estimated Grades and Rank Ordering of Students

INTO has received a number of queries in relation to the provision of estimated grades and rank ordering of students for the summer examinations/ qualifications 2020.

General Guidance from INTO

- CCEA have provided information relating to the awarding of grades during the COVID-19 Pandemic and the resulting closure of schools has now been sent to schools. Northern Ireland operates an 'open qualifications market', so members should also refer to guidance and instruction from awarding bodies in England and Wales where appropriate. Members should also be aware of guidance from OFQUAL and remain cognisant of pre-existing JCQ regulations relating to examinations, including guidance on avoiding malpractice, throughout.
- Members are reminded that the grades they estimate should be based on their professional judgement, derived from the best evidence available to them and agreed across the relevant department/ subject area in school. Centre assessment grades should be based on a holistic professional judgement, balancing the different sources of evidence. No subject teacher or head of department should feel under pressure to change estimated grades that they have made on the basis of their professional judgement. Subject teachers, in collaboration with their heads of department, must consider each student's performance. Their assessment should only be drawn from the existing records and available evidence (as far as possible in the context of current public health advice). It is important that the judgements are objective, and they should only take account of the evidence about student performance. Members who feel that they are being placed under any pressure to adjust assessments in a way which could lead to accusations of malpractice should contact INTO Northern Office for advice. (email link)
- The consequences to teachers of malpractice remain the same as in previous years.
- Members should keep clear written records of all interactions they undertake in relation to the provision of estimated grades and rank ordering and should retain records of this in addition to any work, any written reasoning and any annotated work or notes made in reaching a centre assessment grade for each student.

Workload and COVID-19 Safety Issues:

- The requirement to 'rank order' students may lead to significant difficulties and will require significant time for teachers and Heads of Department to complete. This will have an impact on the time available to those members involved to deliver remote learning opportunities and this should be recognised by centres. To comply with the rank ordering request, teachers within a subject department will need to discuss the rank order and come to a shared view of the standard being applied within their centre. This can be completed using internet 'meeting' programmes such as ZOOM or Microsoft Team. Any associated online meetings, phone calls, emails etc should be focussed and to the point.
- The deadline for the submission of data is no earlier than the 29th May 2020. Adequate time should be allowed to enable teachers to meet this deadline and take place during normal contact time.
- Where possible all communication, retrieval and sharing of information should be done digitally. Schools and individuals **should act within the current HSC PHA guidance at all**

times. Only necessary journeys should be undertaken and where it is absolutely essential that a member must go to a school to retrieve information, vital to the production of a fair estimated grade and ranking position, social distancing must be observed, minimum time spent in school and face to face meetings should not take place. CCEA in their published guidance have added that gathering this information must not require centres to contravene public health instructions.

- It may be possible for information uploaded on internal ICT systems, SIMS etc can be accessed for the purpose of digital distribution to teachers and heads of department, by senior staff and/ or examinations officers, therefore respecting the relevant GDPR policies. This would limit the need for other staff to travel to retrieve information where such information is not already accessible from home.
- CCEA Head of Centre guidance is clear that no further pieces of work, mock exams and so on should be completed by students for the purpose of estimating grades and rank ordering.