

How to use portfolios of evidence to decide school-assessed grades

Working out your school-assessed grade

We have asked you to collect three pieces of evidence for each of your students. The details of how to do this are in our document [Collecting evidence to inform school-assessed grades](#).

This document outlines our high-level approach to how you should work out your school-assessed grade. We appreciate that it is difficult to consider a portfolio of student evidence and then work out what grade should be given to the student. Our approach gives you some structure to support this task, but also gives you the professional discretion to combine the pieces of evidence in the way that works best for your students.

You need to follow a two-step process:

- 1) Allocate a grade to each of the three pieces of evidence
- 2) Use these grades to inform your decision about what overall grade to award

You will need to provide information in your Rationale Document about how you have completed these tasks.

Allocating a grade to each piece of evidence

We have said that you can select your three pieces of evidence for each student from a range of types of student work. As stated in our document [Collecting evidence to inform school-assessed grades](#), the types of work can include one or more of the following:

- Completed past papers from the syllabus with a duration of an hour or more;
- Completed coursework prepared according to syllabus requirements;
- Work made up of questions selected from various past papers;
- Papers used as mock exams;
- Extended project work set by the school during the course of study;
- Tasks set by the centre, such as essays, assignments, problems, practical tasks.

Where you have combined some shorter tasks in order to create a single substantial piece of work that has taken the student at least one hour of concentrated work to complete, this constitutes one of the three pieces of evidence.

If either of the following apply to one of your pieces of evidence:

- it is an entire past paper from before the June 2020 series
- it comprises the full requirements of a coursework component

then you can mark this piece of evidence using the published mark scheme, and you can allocate a grade to this piece of evidence using the published grade thresholds.

If you have used an entire past paper from later than the June 2020 series, then you can mark this piece of evidence using the published mark scheme, but you should **not** allocate a grade to this piece of evidence using the published grade thresholds. Instead, you should treat this in the same way as pieces of evidence which do not have published grade thresholds.

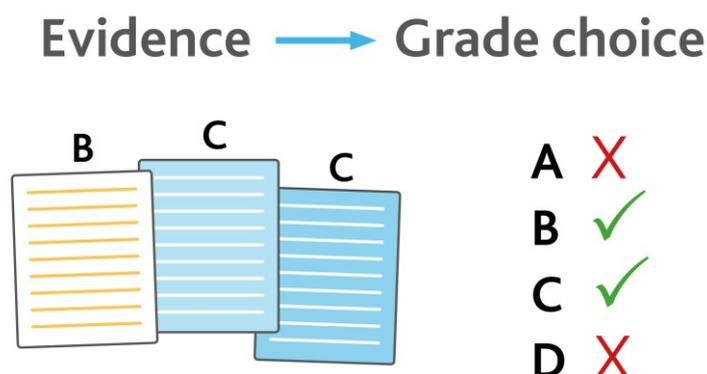
If your pieces of evidence do not already have published grade thresholds, for example you are using a specimen paper, or a task that you have created in your school, then you will need to take a different approach to deciding how to allocate a grade to this piece of work. You will need to reach a judgement about the quality of the piece of evidence in a different way. We will provide further guidance on how to do this, and links to all of the support material that can help you with this, by the middle of April.

Allocating a final grade to each student

We are not setting any rules about how to combine the grades for a candidate's three pieces of evidence to allocate a final grade to the candidate. Some schools will have three pieces of evidence that are well-balanced with respect to the time taken to complete, and the balance of coverage of assessment objectives and skills. Other schools will have pieces of evidence that are less well balanced or will have chosen pieces of evidence which are closely aligned to the syllabus requirements. It is at your professional discretion to consider how best to consider the relative weight that you give to these pieces of evidence when coming to your decision about the final grade. However you should be consistent in how you weight different pieces of evidence – if the same combination of pieces of evidence has been chosen for several candidates, then the weighting given to each piece of evidence should be the same for all candidates.

You should bear in mind that more recent evidence is likely to be more representative of student performance.

You should not allocate a candidate an overall grade which is higher or lower than any of the grades that you have allocated to the individual pieces of evidence. For example, if you have allocated grades B, C, C for the three pieces of evidence, it would not be appropriate to allocate either a grade A (or higher) or a grade D (or lower) for this student. In this example, you will need to make a judgement about whether a grade B or a grade C is the most appropriate grade, based on the student's portfolio of evidence.



You should include details of the approach that you have taken in the Rationale Document.

To help you with this task, we will provide some case study examples of different ways of balancing this evidence. We will provide these by the middle of April.

Comparisons with previous groups of candidates

We recommend that you compare the final school-assessed grades for your students for the June 2021 series with results for students from recent years when exams have taken place (2018, 2019) for the same syllabus. This historical data can provide a useful guide to the expected profile of results and helps you check that you have not been overly harsh or lenient in your assessment of the 2021 students compared to previous years in which exams took place.

You may also use data about the quality of your 2021 students from other sources, e.g. Cambridge CEM tests such as Yellis and Alis, which would help you to understand whether you have set an appropriate overall standard for your group of students. You should be aware that the overall ability of your group of students may vary from one year to the next, in particular where the number of students entered for the syllabus in each year is low. We do not expect the distribution of grades that you allocate in 2021 to be the same as the distribution of grades at your school in previous years and data from other sources such as Cambridge CEM tests may provide extra insight on the likely grade distribution for your 2021 students. However, you should understand and be able to explain why there are differences with a previous year.

Where you have accepted private candidates, they should be excluded from such comparisons.

Sharing information with students

You can tell students the mark that you have given for each piece of evidence, but you should not tell students the grade that you have allocated to each piece of evidence as part of this process. If you wish to use work which candidates have already done, and for which you have already fed back a provisional grade to the students, this is acceptable and should not prevent you from selecting the piece of work to be part of a student's portfolio of evidence. However if you have not yet told students a grade for a piece of work, please do not do so.

You must not tell students the overall final grade that you have allocated. Students must not know the final grade that you have allocated before results are released in August 2021.

AS/A Level candidates

Staged route candidates

If you have candidates who are entered for a staged route option¹ and already have an AS result, you can take this AS grade into account when you are allocating a final grade. This AS result can either be the final grade which was awarded in the June 2020 series or an exam grade from the November 2020 series. You should make your decision about the final grade to allocate using 1) and 2) below:

- 1) the three pieces of A2 evidence in your student's portfolio of evidence **and**
- 2) their existing AS result.

If the AS result is a higher grade than any of the grades allocated to the three pieces of evidence, then the results of the A2 pieces of evidence should be given greater weight – for example, it would be unlikely to be appropriate to allocate an overall grade B to the full A Level if the AS result was a grade 'b' but all the A2 evidence pieces had been allocated a grade C. However, if the A2 grades for

¹ In a staged-route option, in a normal examination series, the candidates have already taken the AS Level and are carrying forward their AS Level marks. They are not re-taking the AS Level.

the individual pieces of evidence suggest a possible range of grades, the AS grade can be used to inform your final decision.

Candidates who are re-sitting an AS

If your candidates already have an AS Level result from a previous series but were planning to retake the AS Level components in June 2021 as well as taking the A2 components, one of the pieces of evidence can be for AS Level. You should start by making your decision about the overall grade to allocate based on your three pieces of evidence, which includes a piece of AS evidence. The piece of AS Level evidence should not be given greater weight than the two other pieces of work combined. If the grades for these individual pieces of evidence suggest a possible range of grades, the AS Level grade from a previous series can be used to inform your final decision.

Linear route candidates

If your candidates are taking the linear route, where they are entered for all the AS Level and A2 components together and for the first time in June 2021, one of the pieces of evidence can be for AS Level. You should make your decision about the overall grade to allocate based on your three pieces of evidence, which includes a piece of AS evidence. The piece of AS Level evidence should not be given greater weight than the two other pieces of work combined.