

UCAS Predicted Grades Statement



St Michael's Catholic Grammar School

Founded by the Sisters of the Poor Child Jesus, a Voluntary Aided school in the trusteeship of St Michael's Catholic School Trustee and a member of the Loreto Education Trust.

Approved by:

Michael Stimpson

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1. Aims

The UCAS Predicted Grades Statement aims to ensure that grade predictions are fair, evidence-based and in the best interests of students. The key aims include:

1. **Providing realistic and aspirational predictions:** Predicted grades should be both motivational and achievable, helping students apply to suitable university courses without setting unrealistic expectations.
2. **Maintaining integrity and credibility:** The school avoids inflating grades to ensure credibility with universities and to preserve the integrity of the application process.
3. **Using professional judgement and clear evidence:** Teachers base predictions primarily on End of Year 12 exam performance, under the moderation of Heads of Department.
4. **Ensuring transparency and objectivity:** Predicted grades are communicated to students and parents and are not influenced by external pressures, such as student/parent requests, university entry requirements or personal circumstances.
5. **Defining a structured and fair Process:** The statement outlines a clear timeline and criteria for determining grades, how and when updates can occur and a formal appeals process based on substantial, relevant evidence.
6. **Avoiding bias and upholding equity:** Predictions must not be influenced by student behaviour, background or protected characteristics. Teachers are encouraged to guard against unconscious bias.
7. **Supporting students through accurate guidance:** The school provides honest, evidence-driven guidance to support students in making informed university applications that match their potential.

In essence, the statement seeks to balance aspiration with realism, ensuring students are supported to succeed without being misled or disadvantaged by inaccurate predictions.

2. What are UCAS predicted grades?

When students apply for undergraduate degree courses at British universities they do so via the University and College Admissions Service (UCAS). As students apply for university courses before they have completed their A-Levels, the school is required to decide predicted grades for each student which are included in the school's reference as part of the online UCAS application. Universities will consider these predicted grades as part of their review of a student's application. When universities make offers of a place to students, these offers are conditional upon a student receiving the stipulated offer grades in their A-Level exams. These offer grades may differ from the student's UCAS predicted grades.

UCAS guidance defines predicted grades as "the grade of qualification an applicant's school or college believes they're likely to achieve in positive circumstances".

Universities tell us that they generally presume that UCAS predicted grades will be “optimistic but realistic – what the applicant can achieve on a good day if they put the work in” (Peter Chetwynd, Associate Director, Undergraduate Admissions, King’s College, London).

3. Principles for formulating UCAS predicted grades

There are many variables that can affect final performance at the end of the two-year course which make formulating predicted grades challenging. Our main aim is to ensure that students are given a UCAS predicted grade that is aspirational but also realistic.

We have a professional and moral responsibility to ensure that the student has realistic expectations regarding their abilities which still remain motivational and aspirational. We will ensure any prediction made is realistic and in the best interests of the student. Overly optimistic predictions can have a significantly negative impact on a student’s progression as they can entail students applying for courses and universities for which they are highly unlikely to achieve the required conditional offer grades.

At St. Michael’s, it is not practice to inflate UCAS predicted grades: this would lead to a poorer correlation between UCAS predictions and real A-Level grades, thus undermining the credibility of the application process and weakening the integrity of our predictions with many universities. Furthermore, issuing over-inflated UCAS predicted grades would lead to an increased number of students having to go through clearing when they are given conditional offers that they are not able to achieve in the A-Level exams.

Predicted grades should be:

- **aspirational and achievable** – stretching predicted grades is motivational for students, unattainable predicted grades are not.
- **determined by professional judgement** – teacher expertise and experience are vital in informing predictions.
- **based on evidence** – student performance in the End of Year 12 Exams will strongly inform predicted grades. This is because this series of exams is the closest replication of the real A-Level exams in being over a longer period of time (two weeks) and assessing a wide variety of subject content. It should be remembered that universities will always have access to GCSE grades so will already have a method of judging an applicant’s prior academic achievement in external examinations. Some universities may also look for correlations between the achieved grades at GCSE and the UCAS predicted grades.
- **transparent and in the best interests of the applicant** – students and parents/carers are formally informed of predicted grades and these grades allow students fair access to the most suitable courses for them.
- **finalised by the point of submitting an application** – universities and colleges are only likely to consider the predicted grades received as part of the UCAS application.

Predicted grades will not be:

- **affected by student or parent/carer pressure**
- **influenced by university or college entry requirements** – predicted grades should be set in isolation of an applicant's university or college choice(s).
- **affected by student behaviour or background** – predicted grades should be made objectively and disregard external factors. However, teachers will be careful to reflect on any preconceptions to mitigate against unconscious bias, particularly for protected characteristics (including sex, race, religion/belief, disability, sexual orientation, or gender reassignment).

UCAS Predicted Grades are never awarded on the basis that they are what a student 'needs' to attend the course and university of their choice.

In addition, the school's approach is never to revise down UCAS grades once these have been issued to students.

This section has been based upon UCAS guidance:

<https://www.ucas.com/advisers/help-and-training/guides-resources-and-training/application-overview/predicted-grades-what-you-need-know-entry-year>

4. How and when are UCAS predicted grades decided?

The most significant and relevant piece of evidence to inform UCAS predicted grades is the End of Year 12 exams in April/May. These exams consist of one or two lengthy papers per subject and cover content taught throughout the academic year. Exams are taken in a two-week exam period in which students are given study leave. This exam series is the part of the sixth form assessment calendar that most closely replicates A-Level exams as they include: a.) full exam papers; b.) are linear and not modular in assessing all of the content that has been taught thus far; c.) Heads of Department ensure that these papers are at the level expected of A-Level papers not being pitched as easier or more challenging than what is presented in A-Level specifications and past papers.

When teachers mark the End of Year 12 exam papers in May of Year 12, they will, under the direction of the Head of Department, give a student a UCAS predicted grade.

This UCAS predicted grade will be either the same grade as that achieved in the End of Year 12 exam or a grade higher. The teacher may predict a grade higher if they believe they have seen evidence (including in class tasks, homework, tests, November tests and the January exams) of higher performance prior to the End of Year 12 exam, or if they were very close to the upper grade boundary of their existing grade. All UCAS predicted grades will be moderated by Heads of Department.

Teachers will not be permitted to give a UCAS predicted grade more than one grade higher than the result of the End of Year 12 exam.

The UCAS predicted grade will be communicated to students and parents/carers as part of the Spring report during the End of Year 12 Exams Results Afternoon.

Those students who are required to take resit papers following the End of Year 12 exams will be given an updated UCAS predicted grade when the results of the End of Year 12 exam resits are sent to students and parents/carers in July. **Given that the maximum grade of these resit papers is a C, the maximum UCAS predicted grade a student can be given following a resit paper is a B (at the discretion of the teacher in agreement with the Head of Department that sufficient evidence of at least that level of performance has been seen during Year 12).**

The only point at which UCAS predicted grades can be reviewed is following the Year 13 November Tests, which is the next assessment point on the sixth form calendar. If a student has performed higher in their November test than their existing UCAS predicted grades, they can request to the Head of Department (who will then consult with the Director of Sixth Form to check that an uplift of performance in a certain subjects has not come to the detriment of performance in other subjects) that their UCAS predicted grade is increased. It is important to note that this will only be relevant to students who have not applied for early application courses (Oxbridge, Medicine, Dentistry, Veterinary Science) as the deadline for these courses is in October of Year 13. Should a student decide to wait for a potential uplift of their UCAS predicted grade in the November test before sending their UCAS application, they must ensure that all other parts of their application, especially the personal statement, are ready by the November tests so that their application can be sent as soon as possible following the confirmation of UCAS predicted grades.

Timeline:

Year 12

- **Late April/Early May:** End of Year 12 Exams
- **Mid-May:** UCAS application system open
- **Friday before May half-term:** End of Year 12 Exams Results Afternoon - UCAS predicted grades are shared with parents/carers
- **Late June/Early July:** End of Year 12 Exam Resits (for selected students)
- **Mid-July:** UCAS predicted grades updates for students who sat an End of Year 12 Exam Resit paper

Year 13

- **Mid-October:** UCAS application deadline for early applications (Oxbridge, Medicine, Dentistry, Veterinary Sciences)
- **November:** November tests
- **Early December:** November tests grades shared with parents/carers. Opportunity for students to request to the Director of Sixth Form for an increase in UCAS Predicted Grade if performance in the November test is higher than the existing UCAS Predicted Grade
- **End of Autumn term:** All applications must be submitted to UCAS

5. Appealing against a UCAS predicted grade

As teachers, Heads of Department and the Director of Sixth Form follow the principles and policies of this statement, any ground for appeal of UCAS Predicted Grades would need to include substantial evidence such as:

- A need for special consideration at the time of the End of Year 12 Exams (based on the threshold for special consideration for A-Level exams as outlined by JCQ: https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/JCQ-A-guide-to-the-special-consideration-process-24-25_FINAL_accessible.pdf)
- A special educational need diagnosed following the completion of the End of Year 12 Exams

The fact that a student 'needs' a certain grade for a particular course or university is not a reason for requesting a review. Any requests for review must be accompanied with appropriate evidence.

To appeal a UCAS Predicted Grade, the parent/carer, in agreement with the student, must send an email to the Director of Sixth Form including the evidence of the above. If evidence of the above is not included in the appeal, it will not be considered by the Director of Sixth Form. The Director of Sixth Form will then review the UCAS Predicted Grade in light of the evidence provided and respond to the appeal via email.

Following this, if a parent/carer, in agreement with the student, wishes to further appeal the decision of the Director of Sixth Form, a meeting will be called to discuss this. Any further appeal of the decision of the Director of Sixth Form would then need to be addressed to the Headteacher.

Appeals against predicted grades will only be heard in the period between the End of Year 12 Exam Results Afternoon and the end of the Summer term of Year 12 in the case of the need for special consideration, or in the period between the End of Year 12 Exam Results

and the end of the Autumn term of Year 12 in the case of a diagnosis of a special educational need

Ultimately, if a student and their parent/carer, following the appeal process, maintain that a UCAS Predicted Grade is not a realistic yet aspirational prediction of how the student will perform in their A-Level exams, they will be encouraged to do the best they can in their A-Levels and then apply to university with the externally validated achieved A-Level grades during a gap year.