

# Guidance for deciding school-assessed grades

We have already provided guidance to schools on how to select three pieces of work for each candidate. This guidance was published in the document [Collecting evidence to support school-assessed grades](#). These three pieces of work will form the evidence schools will use to decide school-assessed grades.

There are five steps to our recommended process for deciding school-assessed grades, which are outlined in this document under the following headings:

- [Step One: Internal standardisation](#)
- [Step Two: Marking individual pieces of evidence](#)
- [Step Three: Internal moderation](#)
- [Step Four: Deciding grades for individual pieces of evidence](#)
- [Step Five: Deciding grades for complete portfolios](#)

The guidance in this document applies to both school candidates and private candidates.

At the end of this document, [Appendix A](#) outlines the published grades available at individual component level and for an overall syllabus grade, for each of our qualifications. [Appendix B](#) shows some different ways that teachers could choose to weight different pieces of evidence and decide on a final grade.

## Step One: Internal standardisation

### When to carry out internal standardisation

**Internal standardisation** is a process that takes place at the beginning of marking to make sure all teachers involved in marking the work (markers) agree to apply the mark scheme in the same way.

Internal standardisation is only required if more than one teacher is marking the work, if multiple candidates have carried out the same task, and if the work has not yet been marked. You should record details of how markers standardised their marking in the Rationale Document.

In cases where work was completed earlier in the course and has already been marked, it is possible that more than one teacher applied the same mark scheme but the teachers did not standardise their marking. This is acceptable and the work can still be included in portfolios. However, you should still include this work in **internal moderation** where appropriate (see Step Three) and you should record the fact that the marking has not been standardised in the Rationale Document.

### How to carry out internal standardisation

We recognise that the process of internal standardisation may vary depending on the type of evidence being marked, and that existing departmental processes may be the most appropriate and effective in some cases. We therefore encourage you to adopt a process that best fits your circumstances, using your collective professional judgement to agree the best approach. In support of this, we recommend that you include some or all of the following methods:

- Read through the question paper (or other task instructions) together, making sure all markers understand the demands of each question or task and have an opportunity to ask questions and resolve any uncertainties.
- Work through the mark scheme together, making sure all markers understand the marking criteria and how to apply them. As part of this process, you may find it helpful to review generic marking principles, agree the definitions of phrases within levels-based mark schemes, identify lists of acceptable and/or unacceptable responses to points-based questions, and note any other relevant points for consideration.
- Where other support materials are available (e.g. Example Candidate Responses, Specimen Answers), work through these together to make sure all markers understand how the marks have been awarded.
- Make copies of a sample of responses from your own school and distribute a copy of each response to all markers. Each marker should mark these independently, before comparing and discussing their marking with the rest of the group. You should aim to reach a consensus on the appropriate mark for each response, grounded in the correct application of the mark scheme.
- The **internal moderator** should resolve any remaining disagreements about how to apply the mark scheme (see Step Three).

## Step Two: Marking individual pieces of evidence

### Marking using Cambridge International mark schemes

You must mark any Cambridge International past papers and questions taken from past papers using our mark schemes. These are available on the School Support Hub.

You should mark coursework using our marking criteria, which are available in the syllabus document or on the School Support Hub. If you do not have access, contact the School Support Hub coordinator at your school.

To help you reach the appropriate final mark, you may also find it useful to refer back to discussions held during **internal standardisation** and to any relevant support materials (e.g. Example Candidate Responses, Specimen Answers) used as part of that process.

### Marking tasks created by the school

Where tasks have been created by the school and have been taken by more than one candidate, the school must write a mark scheme for the tasks and use it to mark each candidate's work. This mark scheme must be included in the Rationale Document.

You may find it useful to refer to mark schemes, Example Candidate Responses and Specimen Answers relating to components that cover the same assessment objectives as the task you have created. Informed by these materials, the teachers involved should use their collective professional judgement to determine how the standard of the work they are marking can meaningfully and consistently be aligned with the standard set by Cambridge International.

## Step Three: Internal moderation

### When to carry out internal moderation

**Internal moderation** is a process that takes place at the end of marking to make sure all teachers involved in marking the work (markers) have applied the mark scheme in the same way.

Where more than one marker has applied the same mark scheme, the markers involved should take part in a formal process for sampling each other's marking to check for consistency. Internal moderation should be carried out for all such work, including work marked earlier in the course and therefore not included in internal standardisation. Where markers find inconsistent marking approaches, candidates' marks should be adjusted as necessary, using a method such as the one outlined below.

Where there is only one teacher marking the pieces of evidence for all candidates, you do not need to have a formal process of internal moderation. Nevertheless, we strongly recommend that the marker should discuss their approach with another teacher or the Head of Centre, making sure that appropriate safeguards are put in place to enable fair and objective marking.

## How to carry out internal moderation

We recognise that the variety of types of evidence involved in this process means that your approach may need to be flexible. In particular, if different classes or candidates have completed different school-created tasks to cover the same assessment objectives, the head of department (or another experienced subject teacher) should use their professional judgement to make sure the standards have been applied fairly and consistently throughout.

Our recommended method of moderation is as follows:

### 1. Selecting an internal moderator

Select one teacher per component or school-created task as an **internal moderator**. The internal moderator is usually a head of department, but they can be a subject teacher. It is their responsibility to check that all markers are marking the component or school-created task consistently to the same standard. An internal moderator makes sure all students in each teacher's class have been judged in the same way, against the same marking criteria for that component or school-created task.

### 2. Initial sampling of marks from every teacher

Each subject teacher marks their own students' work and provides a list of their students' marks to the internal moderator. The internal moderator then checks the marking of each of these markers at the top, middle and bottom of the mark range to see if they agree with the marks. If the internal moderator disagrees with any of the marks they have sampled, they should discuss the marking with the markers involved. Following this discussion, the internal moderator may decide to override some of the marks originally given and to expand the sampling of marks from the markers involved.

### 3. Expanded sampling of marks from some teachers

If the internal moderator needs to change marks for the marking they have reviewed, they should begin by looking at other students' work that has been marked by the same marker. If the internal moderator finds a consistent trend or pattern in a marker's marking they may adjust the marks of other students' work, marked by the same teacher, in line with this trend or pattern.

### 4. Producing a final rank order of internally moderated marks

By internally moderating the marks, the internal moderator produces a final list of all the school's marks for that piece of evidence. The marks are listed in descending order – with the highest marks at the top and the lowest marks at the bottom. This is called a rank order. We call these the internally moderated marks. These are the marks you should use to determine the grade for this piece of evidence. You do not need to submit your rank order to us.

## Step Four: Deciding grades for individual pieces of evidence

Once you have completed the internal moderation of marks, you must next **assign a grade** to each individual piece of evidence.

How you decide these grades will depend on which of the following **four categories of evidence** you are reviewing.

### 1. Complete past papers from the syllabus from before June 2020 and complete coursework

If you have used a complete past paper from any series before June 2020, or the evidence comprises the full requirements of a coursework component, you should use the grade thresholds from that series (before June 2020) that have been published on the School Support Hub.

### 2. Complete past papers from the November 2020 or March 2021 series

If you have used a complete past paper from November 2020 or March 2021, you should **not** use the grade thresholds that were published for these series. These grade thresholds were calculated on the basis of the specific circumstances these exams took place in, so are not applicable for the June 2021 series. You should make your judgements based on the established performance standard for the qualification that was in place before June 2020.

Instead, for complete past papers from the November 2020 or March 2021 series, you should use your **professional judgement** to establish appropriate grade thresholds based on the following sources of evidence, where available. All of these sources of evidence exemplify the established performance standard that we maintain year on year. Using these will help to make sure schools use a common standard when deciding on school-assessed grades.

- Example Candidate Responses
- Specimen Answers
- If you can see that published grade thresholds for a particular paper have usually been very stable from one series to the next, you may consider using grade thresholds for similar question papers from before June 2020.
- If grade thresholds have been relatively variable from one series to the next, you may consider adapting grade thresholds from a question paper from before June 2020 that you judge to be of a similar difficulty, using your professional judgement to make sure appropriate standards are maintained.
- If you have marked other pieces of work for this syllabus that correspond to question papers for which grade thresholds **are** available, you may find it useful to compare the performance standards you have seen at each grade threshold against those of the work you are now grading.
- If the syllabus has changed you may find it useful to look at past papers even if the maximum mark for the paper is different. Consider the types of questions that are in the revised syllabus compared with the previous version of the syllabus. For example, if there used to be three essay questions and now there are two, consider reducing the historic/previous grade thresholds by a third to give you a starting point.

### 3. Specimen papers, past papers from the June 2020 series, and any other Cambridge-set papers for which a published set of grade thresholds is not available

If you have used any Cambridge-set papers for which a published set of grade thresholds is not available, you should use your **professional judgement** to establish grade thresholds based on the following sources of evidence, where available. All these sources of evidence exemplify the established performance standard that we maintain year on year. Using these will help to make sure schools use a common standard when deciding on school-assessed grades.

- Example Candidate Responses
- Specimen Answers
- If you can see that published grade thresholds for a particular paper have usually been very stable from one series to the next, you may consider using grade thresholds for similar question papers from before June 2020.
- If grade thresholds have been relatively variable from one series to the next, you may consider adapting grade thresholds from a question paper from before June 2020 that you judge to be of a similar difficulty, using your professional judgement to make sure appropriate standards are maintained.
- If you have marked other pieces of work for this syllabus that correspond to question papers for which grade thresholds **are** available, you may find it useful to compare the performance standards you have seen at each grade threshold against those of the work you are now grading.
- If the syllabus has changed you may find it useful to look at past papers even if the maximum mark for the paper is different. Consider the types of questions that are in the revised syllabus compared with the previous version of the syllabus. For example, if there used to be three essay questions and now there are two, consider reducing the historic/previous grade thresholds by a third to give you a starting point.

### 4. School-set tasks and work made up of questions selected from various past papers, or part of a past paper, or a part coursework task

In this situation it is harder to make broad comparisons with thresholds from past papers. However, if you use part of a past paper it may be appropriate, as a starting point, to reduce the published grade thresholds from that paper. For example, if you have used two-thirds of a question paper for your task, consider reducing the historic/previous grade thresholds by a third to give you a starting point. In doing this you must make sure the demand of the part of the past paper being used is broadly equivalent to the demand of the paper as a whole.

Where there are no grade thresholds available for the task set, you should compare the performance of candidates on this piece of evidence. Make a holistic judgement about how the performance standard on this task compares with the performance standard seen on candidate work for another similar type of past paper for which grade thresholds are available, and in Exemplar Candidate Responses and Specimen Answers. This will help you understand where to set your own grade thresholds for your task, so you can then allocate grades in a consistent way to all candidates, based on the marks they have achieved on your task.

If you have used the same task (or a similar task) with previous year groups who took exams, and if their work is still available, then you can use the past students' work to help you to assign grades to the work of this year's students. You can look at the work of the past students and compare it to their exam grades: this will give you a good indication of what standard of performance corresponds to

what grade. This will help you to gauge what grades to assign to different standards of performance among this year's students, and where to set your own grade thresholds for your task.

## Additional points to consider

### Special consideration

Special consideration requests will not apply in the usual way for school-assessed candidates in the June 2021 series because these students will not be taking their exams. You should bear in mind that loss of teaching time is not an acceptable reason for special consideration. However, where illness or other adverse personal circumstances that are outside the candidate's control might have temporarily affected performance at the time they completed a particular piece of evidence, for example, the candidate was unwell on the day when mock exams were completed, you should bear that in mind when selecting work and making your judgements.

You should tell candidates which pieces of work you have selected for them and appropriately consider any feedback from them about the choice. You should check with each candidate that they were well at the time when they did the work and that their performance was not affected by adverse circumstances outside their control.

If you discover that a candidate's performance on a piece of work was affected by adverse circumstances, you should replace the affected piece of evidence with another piece of evidence if this is possible.

You may not be able to replace an affected piece of evidence. If this is the case, you should start by making a judgement about a grade to allocate in the same way that you have done for all other candidates. Then you will need to consider whether, in your opinion, the candidate's performance on the affected piece of evidence is out of line with their performance on the other pieces of evidence or not, and whether any adjustment to the grade that you have awarded is appropriate.

In normal circumstances when special consideration is applied to candidates who have taken an exam paper, we only apply a small adjustment to marks. Consider the candidate performance on the affected piece of evidence and the grade that you have allocated. Is the candidate performance at the bottom, the middle or the top of the grade? If the candidate performance is within the lower end of performance for the grade, it would not be appropriate to make an adjustment to the grade that you have allocated. However, if the candidate is close to achieving the next grade up, you may wish to allocate the higher grade. If you have more than one affected candidate, you must take the same approach for all candidates. You will need to explain the approach that you have taken in the Rationale Document.

### Available grades at component level

The published grade thresholds for an individual syllabus component do not always correspond to the grades that are available as a final syllabus grade. For example, for Cambridge IGCSEs graded A\*–G, we do not set or publish a Grade A\* threshold for individual question paper components. However, Grade A\* is available as a final syllabus grade.

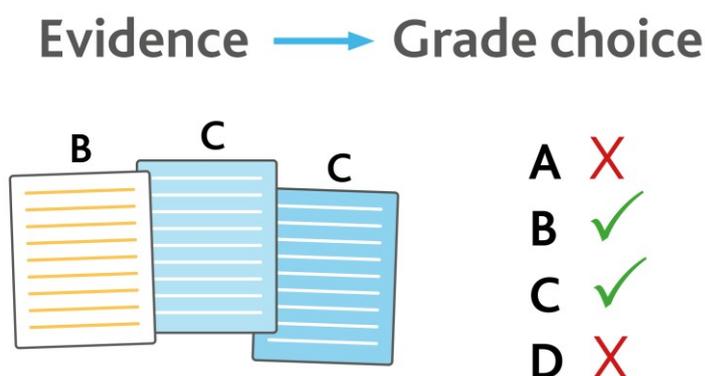
When you are allocating grades for the individual pieces of evidence, you should think about the grade for the piece of evidence in line with the final syllabus grades. For example, you could allocate a Grade A\* for a piece of evidence if you felt that the standard of work produced by the candidate was at a higher level than the standard seen for candidates you have allocated a Grade A. This may mean that you will need to create your own grade threshold for a component, if the grade threshold does not exist.

You can find more details about component grades and syllabus grades, and how to calculate new component grade thresholds, in **Appendix A**.

## Step Five: Deciding grades for complete portfolios

Once you have decided on the grade that you have allocated to the three pieces of evidence for each student, you will need to decide on the final grade to allocate to each student. We have said (in our factsheet [How to use portfolios of evidence to decide school-assessed grades](#)) that 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 must be consistent in how you weight different pieces of evidence – if the same combination of pieces of evidence has been chosen for several students, then the weighting given to each piece of evidence should be the same for all of these students in your school. You will need to be able to explain your approach to the weighting of evidence, and how you determined the final grade for each student, in the Rationale Document.

You must allocate a final grade to the candidate which is within the range of the grades allocated to the individual pieces of evidence.



You must not tell students the overall final grade that you have allocated. Students must not know the final grade that you have allocated, or the weighting that has been given to each piece of evidence, before results are released in August 2021.

Think about the three pieces of evidence that you have for each candidate. Are you able to treat them all as being of equal value when making your decision about the final grade, or should you give some of them more weight than others? What are the factors that you might want to consider when deciding how much emphasis to give to each piece of evidence? Questions to consider are:

- Are the pieces of evidence equally balanced in terms of the amount of time that students have spent on each piece, or did one piece of work represent a greater amount of work and so could be given greater weight in your decision making?
- Are the pieces of evidence equally balanced in terms of coverage of content, or did one piece of work represent the best coverage of content and so could be given greater weight in your decision making?
- Are the pieces of evidence equally balanced in terms of coverage of assessment objectives? Is there an assessment objective that has greater weight within the syllabus in normal exam conditions? If so, you could consider giving greater weight to the piece of evidence that gives most evidence of performance against this assessment objective.
- Were the pieces of evidence completed at school under controlled conditions, or were they completed at home? How confident are you that the work is the candidate's unaided work?
- When was the work completed? Recent evidence is likely to be more representative of student performance.

Some Cambridge International AS & A Level candidates already have an AS Level result from either the June 2020 or the November 2020 series. This can also be taken into account when deciding on the final grade, in line with the guidance in our factsheet [How to use portfolios of evidence to decide school-assessed grades](#).



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, to check that you have not been too harsh or lenient in your assessment of the June 2021 students compared to previous years when exams took place. There is more guidance in our factsheet [How to use portfolios of evidence to decide school-assessed grades](#).

When deciding on the final grade for each student, you will need to consider both the grade that you have allocated to each individual piece of evidence, and also whether the candidate's grade shows strong, middle or weak performance at this grade (based on the mark that you have given for the task).

Some case study examples of using the three pieces of evidence (and Cambridge International AS Level results, where appropriate) to allocate a final grade are in **[Appendix B](#)**.

## Appendix A – Component grades and syllabus grades

The following table outlines the published grades available at individual component level and for an overall syllabus grade, for each of our qualifications:

| Qualification                    | Component grades             | Syllabus grades                       | Difference?   |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| Cambridge IGCSE™                 | A, B, C, D, E, F, G, U       | A*, A, B, C, D, E, F, G, U            | Yes – no A* at component level                        |
| Cambridge IGCSE (9–1)            | 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, U | 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, U          | No  |
| Cambridge O Level                | A, B, C, D, E, U             | A*, A, B, C, D, E, U                  | Yes – no A* at component level                        |
| Cambridge International AS Level | A, B, C, D, E, U             | A, B, C, D, E, U                      | No  |
| Cambridge International A Level  | A, B, C, D, E, U             | A*, A, B, C, D, E, U                  | Yes – no A* at component level                        |
| Cambridge Pre-U                  | D, M, P, U                   | D1, D2, D3, M1, M2, M3, P1, P2, P3, U | Yes – component thresholds are for D3, M3 and P3 only |

### Cambridge IGCSE and IGCSE (9–1)

For tiered Cambridge IGCSE and tiered Cambridge IGCSE (9–1) subjects, your final school-assessed grades must reflect the tier of entry. You will need to bear in mind the structure of the tiered syllabus when you are determining school-assessed grades. For example, Cambridge IGCSE science syllabuses have tiered entry options. Candidates who have studied the Core subject content are eligible for overall syllabus Grades C to G or 5 to 1. Candidates who have studied the Extended subject content (Core and Supplement) are eligible for overall syllabus Grades A\* to G or 9 to 1.

There is no A\* grade threshold at component level. However, when the A\* grade threshold is set at syllabus option level, it is usually set by working out the number of marks between the syllabus-level Grade A threshold and the syllabus-level Grade B threshold, and adding this to the A threshold. Where this gives a threshold that is close to the maximum mark, it may instead be set halfway between the Grade A threshold and the maximum total mark for the syllabus option. You could take a similar approach when deciding whether a candidate has demonstrated A\* achievement for an individual piece of evidence.

### Cambridge O Level

There is no published A\* grade threshold at component level. However, when the A\* grade threshold is set at syllabus option level, it is usually set by working out the number of marks between the syllabus-level Grade A threshold and the syllabus-level Grade B threshold, and adding this to the A threshold. Where this gives a threshold that is close to the maximum mark, it may be set halfway between the Grade A threshold and the maximum total mark for the syllabus option. You could take a similar approach when deciding whether a candidate has demonstrated A\* achievement for an individual piece of evidence.

### **Cambridge International AS & A Level**

At Cambridge International AS Level, there is no A\* grade at either component level or syllabus level. Therefore, for a student taking the AS syllabus, a strong Grade A on each AS paper can only lead to a Grade A for AS overall.

At Cambridge International A Level, there is no A\* grade threshold at component level. However, when the A\* grade threshold is set at syllabus option level, it is usually set by working out the number of marks between the syllabus-level Grade A threshold and the syllabus-level Grade B threshold, and adding this to the A threshold. Where this gives a threshold that is close to the maximum mark, it may be set halfway between the Grade A threshold and the maximum total mark for the syllabus option. You could take a similar approach when deciding whether a candidate has demonstrated A\* achievement for an individual piece of evidence that is used towards an A Level grade.

### **Cambridge Pre-U**

Cambridge Pre-U reports achievement on a scale of nine grades:

- Distinction 1, 2 and 3
- Merit 1, 2 and 3
- Pass 1, 2 and 3.

The full range of grade thresholds is only available for the syllabus option, not for each component. When considering Cambridge Pre-U component thresholds to help determine the grade for each piece of evidence, consider where the candidate's mark falls. For example, if the candidate's mark is towards the top of the range of marks within Merit, award M1. If the candidate achieves marks that are towards the bottom of the range of marks for Pass, award P3. You may find it easier to divide each component mark range for Distinction, Merit and Pass into three to help you decide whether the candidate's work represents a strong or a weak grade for that piece of evidence. There may also be grade descriptions in your syllabus that help you to understand what performance looks like at D2, M2 or P2.

## Appendix B – Case study examples

This appendix shows some different ways that teachers could choose to weight different pieces of evidence and decide on a final grade. These are examples only. A teacher's professional judgement will decide how to combine the pieces of evidence. You will need to be able to explain your approach to the weighting of evidence, and how you determined the final grade for each student, in the Rationale Document.

### Example 1

Mohammed has completed the following three pieces of evidence for a Cambridge IGCSE syllabus and has been allocated grades as follows:

| Piece of evidence   | Grade | Considerations about the evidence  | Notes on performance   |
|---|-------|--|--|
| Complete past paper 1 from November 2019                          | A     | Marked and graded against Cambridge published mark scheme and grade thresholds.  | Mohammed's mark for this piece was just above the grade threshold for Grade A.                     |
| Extended essay done in class, based on content covered in paper 2 | C     | There were no published grade thresholds for this task, as it was created in the school. The teachers used the guidance provided by Cambridge International to understand the quality of work required for each grade.                     | Mohammed's essay was judged to be at the bottom end of a C-grade standard.                         |
| Coursework in line with syllabus requirements                     | D     | The full syllabus coursework requirements were completed, so this piece of evidence was marked and graded against the Cambridge published mark scheme and grade thresholds, as these grade thresholds do not change from series to series. | Mohammed's mark for his coursework was just below the grade threshold mark required for a Grade C. |

#### Final decision: C

In line with the instructions in Step Five of this document, Mohammed must be awarded a grade in the range A, B, C or D. However, the range of performance across the pieces of evidence meant that a grade of B or C was likely to be the most appropriate.

All pieces of work took over an hour to complete. However, the coursework took the longest amount of time, covers all of the assessment objectives, and is worth 40 per cent of the marks for the syllabus. For this reason, teachers decided to give most weight to the grade given for the coursework component, as this represents 40 per cent of the work for the syllabus. Candidates had been able to complete their coursework tasks in school, so teachers felt confident that it was candidates' own work.

Mohammed's lowest grade (D) was on the piece of work that was given most weight. As he also had a low Grade C on his extended essay, Grade C was felt to be the grade that best represents the overall standard of Mohammed's performance, despite his good result on paper 1.

## Example 2

Luisa has completed the following three pieces of evidence for a Cambridge IGCSE syllabus and has been allocated grades as follows:

| Piece of evidence                        | Grade | Considerations about the evidence   | Notes on performance                         |
|--|-------|---|--|
| Complete past paper 1 from November 2019 | B     | Marked and graded against the Cambridge published mark scheme and grade thresholds.   | Marked out of 40, worth 30% of the syllabus. |
| Complete past paper 2 from November 2019 | A     | Marked and graded against the Cambridge published mark scheme and grade thresholds.   | Marked out of 80, worth 50% of the syllabus. |
| Complete past paper 3 from March 2020    | A*    | Marked and graded against the Cambridge published mark scheme and grade thresholds. In line with Cambridge guidance, the teachers worked out an A* grade threshold and were able to allocate a Grade A* for this piece of work. | Marked out of 40, worth 20% of the syllabus. |

### Final decision: A

In line with the instructions in Step Five of this document, Luisa must be awarded a grade in the range A\*, A or B.

All of the pieces of evidence chosen are a direct match to the syllabus requirements. The past papers are all from before June 2020, so were marked using the published mark scheme and grade thresholds.

Teachers needed to decide whether candidates had achieved an A\* at component level. They worked out an A\* grade threshold for each component by working out the number of marks between the Grade A threshold and Grade B threshold, and adding this to the A threshold.

All candidates at the school had completed the same three pieces of evidence, and these were identical to the three papers that candidates would have taken if they had been taking the subject in exam conditions. So in this case, the teachers were able to add up the component grade thresholds, in line with the weightings given in the syllabus, to produce a set of grade thresholds for the syllabus overall. The A\* threshold for the syllabus was produced by working out the number of marks between the syllabus-level Grade A threshold and the syllabus-level Grade B threshold, and adding this to the A threshold.

The teachers then compared each candidate's total mark, in line with the weightings given in the syllabus, with their final set of grade thresholds for the syllabus. When this was done, the grade allocated to Luisa was a Grade A.

There is more information about syllabus weightings on our [website](#).

### Example 3

Oliver has completed the following three pieces of evidence for a Cambridge International AS Level syllabus and has been allocated grades as follows:

| Piece of evidence   | Grade | Considerations about the evidence   | Notes on performance  |
|---|-------|---|---|
| Complete past paper 1 from November 2020  | C     | Marked using the Cambridge published mark scheme. Grade thresholds cannot be used, so teachers used their understanding of the performance demonstrated in Example Candidate Responses and other Cambridge support materials to give a grade.   | Oliver's responses were judged to be in line with a mid-level performance at Grade C.                                       |
| Work made up of questions selected from various past papers                       | D     | As the work was based on past questions, the teachers were able to construct their own mark scheme using the relevant Cambridge published mark schemes. Teachers used their understanding of the performance demonstrated in Example Candidate Responses and other Cambridge support materials to give a grade. | Oliver's responses were judged to be in line with a high-level performance at Grade D, but not quite at a Grade C standard. |
| Practical coursework task, representing 50% of the normal coursework requirements | D     | Candidates had been unable to complete all elements of the coursework, as they were unable to get into school to finish it. The teachers created a set of grade thresholds that were half of the published grade thresholds (out of 50 instead of 100) and marked the task against these thresholds.            | Oliver's task was marked against the school's grade thresholds, and his mark was given a Grade D.                           |

#### Final decision: D

In line with the instructions in Step Five of this document, Oliver must be awarded either a Grade C or a Grade D.

The pieces of evidence all took a similar time for candidates to complete, so the teachers decided to give equal weight to each piece of evidence. However, teachers felt most confident in their judgements about the grade for the practical coursework task, as they had been able to create a set of grade thresholds for this task.

Oliver was given a Grade D for two out of the three pieces of evidence. One of these (the practical coursework task) was the piece where the teachers felt most confident about the grade, so they felt that the most appropriate final grade for Oliver was a Grade D.

## Example 4

Chen is taking a Cambridge International A Level syllabus following a staged route, and already has an AS result from the November 2020 series. Chen completed the following three pieces of evidence for an A Level syllabus and has been allocated grades as follows:

| Piece of evidence                                   | Grade | Considerations about the evidence   | Notes on performance   |
|---|-------|---|--|
| Complete past paper 3 on A2 content from June 2019  | B     | Marked and graded against the Cambridge published mark scheme and grade thresholds.   | Chen's mark was at the top end of the range of marks for a Grade B.                |
| Complete past paper 4 on A2 content from March 2020 | C     | Marked and graded against the Cambridge published mark scheme and grade thresholds.   | Chen's mark was in the mid-range of marks for a Grade C.                           |
| Essay (on A2 paper 4 content) set by the school     | C     | The essay task was the same as one of the question types in the past papers for paper 4. Teachers marked it using the levels-based mark scheme criteria in the Cambridge published mark scheme. They compared the performance seen on this task with the performance seen from all candidates answering the same task on the complete past paper 4 (marked to grade thresholds). This helped them to decide on an appropriate grade for this piece of work. | Chen's response was judged to be in line with a high-level performance at Grade C. |
| AS result from November 2020                        | A     | Result from a previous series, which can be considered in addition to the three pieces of A2 evidence if the grades for the individual pieces of evidence suggest a range of grades.  | Chen's final AS mark was well above the Grade A threshold.                         |

### Final decision: B

In line with the instructions in Step Five of this document, Chen must be awarded either a Grade B or a Grade C, based on the grades given to the three pieces of A2 evidence. The AS result from November 2020 can be used to inform the final decision.

The past papers took longer to complete than the essay task, so the teachers decided to give more weight to these two pieces of evidence. Also, the essay task was completed before the two past papers, so the past papers were felt to be a better indicator of current performance.

Chen was given a Grade B for past paper 3 and a Grade C for past paper 4, so either grade could be chosen. Chen's mark on past paper 3 was at the top end of the range of marks for a Grade B, and Chen's AS result was a Grade A. For this reason, the teachers felt that the most appropriate final grade for Chen was a Grade B.

## Example 5

Samira is taking a Cambridge International A Level syllabus following a linear route, taking all the AS and A2 components together, and does not have any previous AS results in the subject. Samira completed the following three pieces of evidence for an A Level syllabus and has been allocated grades as follows:

| Piece of evidence                                   | Grade | Considerations about the evidence   | Notes on performance   |
|---|-------|---|--|
| Complete past paper 1 on AS content from June 2019  | C     | Marked and graded against the Cambridge published mark scheme and grade thresholds. | Samira's mark was in the middle of the range of marks for a Grade C. |
| Complete past paper 3 on A2 content from March 2020 | D     | Marked and graded against the Cambridge published mark scheme and grade thresholds. | Samira's mark was in the middle of the range of marks for a Grade D. |
| Complete past paper 4 on A2 content from March 2020 | E     | Marked and graded against the Cambridge published mark scheme and grade thresholds. | Samira's mark was in the middle of the range of marks for a Grade E. |

### Final decision: D

In line with the instructions in Step Five of this document, Samira must be awarded a Grade C, D or E, based on the grades given to the three pieces of evidence.

All of the past papers were taken by candidates during this academic year, but the A2 past papers 3 and 4 have been taken most recently and so the teachers felt that these were a stronger indicator of candidate performance. The teachers were also aware of the guidance from Cambridge International that although all three pieces of evidence should be used to make a decision on the final grade, the piece of AS Level evidence should not be given greater weight than the two other pieces of work combined. The previous pattern of performance for candidates at the school was that candidates often achieved one grade lower at A Level than their AS result. Teachers therefore decided that the grade they should award to all candidates should be based on the grades from the A2 evidence.

The teachers were not surprised to see that Samira's result for past paper 1, the AS content, was better than her result on her A2 past papers, as this was in line with the pattern of performance for their school. The approach to weighting the evidence more towards A2 evidence meant that they would allocate a Grade D or a Grade E, as these were Samira's grades for the pieces of evidence based on the A2 content. However, because Samira had achieved a higher grade, a Grade C, on the AS content, the teachers felt that the most appropriate final grade for Samira was a Grade D.

## Example 6

Mike is taking a Cambridge International A Level syllabus. Mike already has an AS Level result from the June 2020 series, but was intending to resit the AS components in June 2021. For this reason, in line with the guidance from Cambridge International, his three pieces of evidence are based on both AS and A2 content. Mike completed the following three pieces of evidence for an A Level syllabus and has been allocated grades as follows:

| Piece of evidence  | Grade | Considerations about the evidence  | Notes on performance  |
|--|-------|--|---|
| Complete past paper 1 (AS content) from November 2019                  | A     | Marked using the Cambridge published mark scheme and grade thresholds.   | Mike's mark was well above the grade threshold mark required for a Grade A, but did not meet the teachers' threshold for an A*. |
| Work made up of A2 content questions selected from various past papers | A     | As the work was based on past questions, the teachers were able to construct their own mark scheme using the relevant Cambridge published mark schemes.<br>Teachers used their understanding of the performance demonstrated in Example Candidate Responses and other Cambridge support materials to give a grade. | Mike's responses were judged to be in line with a high-level performance at Grade A, but not quite at an A* standard.           |
| Coursework (A2) in line with syllabus requirements                     | A*    | The full syllabus coursework requirements were completed, so this piece of evidence was marked and graded against the Cambridge published mark scheme and grade thresholds, as these grade thresholds do not change from series to series.   | Mike's mark for his coursework was just above the grade threshold mark required for a Grade A*.                                 |
| AS result from June 2020   | B     | Result from a previous series, which can be considered in addition to the three pieces of A2 evidence if the grades for the individual pieces of evidence suggest a range of grades.   | This was a teacher-assessed grade so there is no mark available.  |

### Final decision: A\*

In line with the instructions in Step Five of this document, Mike must be awarded either a Grade A\* or a Grade A, based on the grades given to the three pieces of evidence. The AS result from June 2020 can be used to inform the final decision.

For the AS past paper coursework component, there is no published Grade A\* threshold for an AS paper, but because the work is contributing towards an A Level, where A\* is an available

grade, the teachers worked out an A\* grade threshold for this past paper, to see which candidates had achieved above an A standard.

The coursework was a more substantial piece of work to complete, and targets all four assessment objectives covered by the syllabus. It is the only piece of evidence to cover all of the assessment objectives, and it is at A2 standard. For this reason, teachers decided to give the greatest weight to this piece of work. This piece of evidence was completed in line with the usual requirements set by Cambridge International in the syllabus, and can be fully authenticated by the school.

The result for the AS piece of evidence (Grade A) showed that Mike's grade had improved on the AS result that Mike achieved in June 2020. For this reason, the June 2020 AS result was not taken into account in the final decision and this was recorded in the Rationale Document. The teachers noted that for the AS piece of evidence, Mike's mark was well above the mark required for a Grade A. They then focused their judgement on the two A2 pieces of evidence. The coursework grade, given the greatest weight, is A\*. The work for the other piece of A2 evidence was felt to be very close to the A\* standard.

For this reason, the teachers felt that the most appropriate final grade for Mike was a Grade A\*.

## Example 7

Lily completed the following three pieces of evidence for a Cambridge Pre-U syllabus and has been allocated grades as follows:

| Piece of evidence   | Grade | Considerations about the evidence   | Notes on performance  |
|---|-------|---|---|
| Complete past paper 1 from June 2019                      | M1    | Marked and graded against the Cambridge published mark scheme and grade thresholds. | Lily's mark was in the middle of the range of marks for a Grade M1. |
| Complete past paper 3 from June 2018                      | D3    | Marked and graded against the Cambridge published mark scheme and grade thresholds. | Lily's mark was at the bottom of the range of marks for a Grade D3. |
| Personal Investigation in line with syllabus requirements | D2    | Marked and graded against the Cambridge published mark scheme and grade thresholds. | Lily's mark was at the bottom of the range of marks for a Grade D2. |

### Final decision: D3

In line with the instructions in Step Five of this document, Lily must be awarded a Grade M1, D3 or D2, based on the grades given to the three pieces of evidence.

Component thresholds are published for Grades D3, M3 and P3. The teachers created component thresholds for D1, D2, M1, M2, P1 and P2 by dividing the component mark range for each of these grades into three. The grade descriptions in the published syllabus were also used to understand what performance might look like at the midpoint grades of D2, M2 and P2.

Both of the past papers were taken under controlled conditions in school. Usually, the teachers make time available for candidates to do work on their Personal Investigation in class, to give the school greater confidence that it is the candidate's unaided work. However, because candidates were working remotely for a period of time, most of the work on the Personal Investigation was done at home. Although teachers were confident that they could authenticate the work as the candidate's own, they also decided to give greater weight to the past papers as these had been fully supervised in school.

On the day that the past paper from June 2019 was completed, Lily reported to the teacher that she had felt unwell with abdominal pain. The teacher marked the past paper as normal, and a grade of M1 was awarded, based on the Cambridge published grade thresholds. The teachers then considered whether Lily's grade should be adjusted under the guidance for special consideration. The decision was that it should not, as the nature of Lily's illness had not been severe, and she was in the middle of the M1 grade, not near the D3 grade threshold. This was recorded in the Rationale Document for the syllabus.

Lily's highest grade (D2) was on the piece of work that the teachers were giving the least weight to. Lily's performance on the two past papers was very similar, just one grade apart – on past paper 1 she achieved an M1, and on past paper 3 Lily just achieved a D3. The teachers felt that the most appropriate final grade for Lily was a grade D3.