

UCAS Predicted Grades Policy

When a student applies to University through UCAS, the school is asked to give predicted grades in order that Universities are best able to establish the suitability of the student to their chosen courses. Predicted grades at Rawlins Academy Sixth Form will be honest and based on informed opinion. Anything else would be dishonest and in the long-term disadvantageous to the student body as well as the academic reputation of the school.

UCAS predicted grades play a crucial role for universities in their decision making process. Universities will not usually make offers to students who are likely to fall below the normal minimum entrance grade requirements unless other parts of the application are exceptional.

The timetable for university applications can be both an emotional and stressful time for all who are involved in this process including students, their parents, teachers and UCAS tutors. However, it is our responsibility to ensure that any prediction made is realistic and in the best interests of the student. Overly optimistic predictions have shown, with experience, to have a significant negative impact on both the students' progression and destination after leaving Rawlins Academy Sixth Form.

The school and subject teachers will work with students and their parents to ensure their predicted grades accurately reflect their ability, potential and aspirations. Rawlins Academy Sixth Form will, as a matter of course, take responsibility to guide students through the UCAS process.

Below sets out the predicted grade policy at Rawlins Academy Sixth Form.

1. When do students get their predicted grades?

Tutors release predicted grades around mid-September. This ensures that all students, including early-entry applicants (Oxbridge, Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary) have sufficient time to choose their courses appropriately.

2. How are predicted grades decided?

It is essential that we predict grades that we feel are a true reflection of each student's ability and potential. We adopt an honest and evidence-based approach to this process, whereby attainment and progress in Year 12 is the main indicator of future performance.

The teacher or teachers of each subject decide the predicted grades for their students, as they know their own students best. They may consider some or all of the following factors when making their decision:

- Results of Year 12 half-termly assessments or mock exams
- Grades awarded in progress reports
- General attitude to learning and commitment
- Performance in homework assignments
- GCSE results
- The student's drive and passion for the subject
- Professional judgement and experience of making UCAS predictions

Scenario: For example, a student who consistently achieves 'C' grades throughout Year 12 in assessments and homework assignments in a particular subject may be awarded a predicted grade of a 'C', or indeed a 'B' if they have an excellent work ethic and attitude to learning. It is unlikely, however, that such a student would be predicted an 'A' grade, as the evidence would not support such a prediction.

Teachers will not base their predictions on a student's wishes, what the student needs to get into a particular course, or on students' promises that they will 'work harder next year'. While this affirmation is certainly admirable, it is the case that Year 13 students work harder than they did in Year 12, simply to maintain their grades, due to the increased difficulty of final year content.

3. Over-inflated predictions

It is understandable that students and parents may desire teachers to over-predict A Level grades, in order that the student may access a particular University course. However, we have a professional and moral responsibility to ensure that the student has realistic expectations with regards to their abilities, whilst still remaining motivational and aspirational.

Scenario: Take this situation as an example: you are predicted BBB, you pressure your teachers to predict you AAA to meet the grade requirements of the course you want. In August you get the BBB the teacher originally predicted but end up with no place because you did not get the AAA you need for the course. You have to go through Clearing and end up on a course which is of a CCC or DDD level. This should illustrate how it is better to be happy with a good university than strive for one which is most likely unachievable and end up enrolling at a course at a less desirable institution.

The potential consequences of over-predicting A-Level grades can be outlined as follows:

- Students find themselves without a University place when they receive their results, as they achieved what teachers originally predicted, but not the higher grades that were requested. The student must go through the competitive Clearing process, often finally choosing a course that has lower entry requirements than what they actually achieved.
- Future Rawlins students are affected, as the school's reputation for accurate predictions is diminished. University admission tutors build up a knowledge of the accuracy of a particular school's predictions. Therefore, if the school becomes known for over-predicting, then future applications are put at a disadvantage, as their predicted grades will be brought into question.
- Teachers are asked to go against their professional judgement and honest opinion, which is not moral, nor is it fair to other students who are given an accurate prediction that may be lower than they would like.

4. Appeals

If a student feels that a particular predicted grade is not a true reflection of their ability or what they may achieve at the end of Year 13, then they may ask for the grade to be increased by providing a letter of appeal to their Head of Year. This should outline the reasons why they think the predicted grade is not a fair assessment of what they may achieve. The Head of Year will then consult the subject teacher or teachers, following which a final decision will be made as to whether or not the grade should be increased. Please note that the final decision will rest with the Head of Year.

5. What happens next?

Teachers input their predicted grades along with their comments for the student's UCAS reference around mid-September. This information is passed along to the student's tutor, who will then put the grades onto the student's UCAS application, along with their completed reference. The application is then checked by the Head of Year, before finally being sent to UCAS.

**UCAS 2020 – 2021: please note that UCAS grade predictions took place before the national lockdown and as such predictions were made on the assumption that students would complete a full year of study and sit their final examinations in the summer.*

<https://www.ucas.com/advisers/managing-applications/2021-guidance-and-changes/predicted-grades-what-you-need-know-2021-entry>