



TOWNLEY  
— EST 1937 —  
GRAMMAR SCHOOL

UCAS and  
Predicted Grades  
Policy

## Context

Townley prepares pupils for a variety of post-sixth form destinations, including further study in Higher Education (Universities in the UK and abroad), apprenticeships, employment and vocational training. For some of these destinations, principally in relation to UK University applications, the school is required to provide predictions of the grades that a pupil is expected to attain at GCE Advanced Levels (A-Levels).

## Definition and purpose of 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”***. There are many variables which affect final performance at the end of the two-year course which make formulating predicted grades very challenging.

Our main aim is to ensure that students gain access to the **most suitable courses for them** and are successful and fulfilled in their Higher Education studies or on an appropriate apprenticeship / job-based training programme. Universities tell us that they generally presume that ***“the predictions 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).

We have a **professional and moral responsibility** to ensure that the student has **realistic expectations** regarding their abilities, whilst still remaining **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.

## Principles for formulating predicted grades:

Put simply, a student will not achieve an unrealistic UCAS grade. Neither is the school’s policy to inflate UCAS grades: this would have the impact of leading to a poorer correlation between predictions and outcomes, thus undermining the credibility of the process and would weaken the integrity of our estimates with many universities. In addition, the school’s approach is never to revise down UCAS grades once these have been issued to students. This is true between provisional UCAS grades from Internal Examinations, and final UCAS grades issued following Autumn Assessments in Year 13.

Teachers at Townley will follow these principles when considering the most appropriate predicted grade for an individual student.

## Predicted grades should be:

- **aspirational and achievable** – stretching predicted grades are 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 Year 12 will strongly inform predicted grades. This may be consistent performance in assessments and / or examinations during the academic year. High ALPS target grades are an indicator of potential future performance but not a guarantee. Therefore, students who have high ALPS targets but poor performance in Year 12 should not be automatically given the highest grades. Conversely, students should not be limited by prior performance at GCSE / ALPS targets. Very many students flourish in their chosen A Level subjects and outperform their ALPS target grades. It should be remembered that universities / employers will always have access to GCSE grades so will already have a method of judging an applicant’s prior academic achievement in external examinations.

- **data-driven** – while each school will have its own process, you should look at past Level 2 and Level 3 performance, and/or internal examinations to inform your predictions
- **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. While they will make every effort to accommodate genuine errors in data entry, this may not always be possible for highly selective courses.

## Predicted grades will not be:

- **affected by student, parental, guardian, or carer pressure** – there are [risks associated with inflating and suppressing predicted grades](#)
- **influenced by university or college entry requirements or behaviours** – 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. 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)

This section has been exclusively based upon UCAS guidance, and is clear guidance for all schools supporting UCAS processes: [Predicted grades – what you need to know for entry this year | Undergraduate | UCAS](#)

## UCAS Timeline

### When do students get their predicted grades?

We will release Provisional Predicted Grades towards the end of the summer term of Year 12, following Internal Examinations. This ensures that all students, including early entry applicants (Oxbridge, Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary) have sufficient time to choose their courses appropriately, as well as plan revision and super-curricular activities to complete their application.

### 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 teachers of each subject decide the predicted grades for their students, based upon whole school guidance and with their Head of Department, as they know their own students best. They will consider the following when formulating predicted grades:

- Year 12 Internal Examination Assessments
- Year 12 Unit Assessments
- Year 13 Autumn Assessments\*

(\*) Year 13 Autumn Assessments will be used to inform Final Predicted Grades that are given to students by the end of September. They will not lower any grade provided in Provisional Predicted Grades, but offer students an opportunity to bring up their grade.

Teachers may also consider the following subsidiary evidence, where a decision between two grades is not immediately clear:

- Grades awarded in progress reports
- General attitude to learning and commitment
- Non-Examined Assessment (NEA components)
- Quality of classwork and homework
- The student's drive and passion for the subject
- Engagement in super-curricular activities that can be evidenced to enhance A-Level progress and attainment
- Professional judgement and experience of making UCAS predictions

*Scenario: 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 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'. Whilst this sentiment is certainly admirable, it is usually the case that Year 13 students need to work harder than they did in Year 12, simply to maintain their grades, due to the increased difficulty of final year content.

### **Why can't predictions just be made higher?**

It is understandable that students and parents may want teachers to over-predict A Level grades, in order for a student to 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 remaining motivational and aspirational.

**Scenario:** A student is predicted BBB, they pressure teachers to predict AAA to meet the grade requirements of the course they want. In August they get the BBB the teacher originally predicted but end up with no place because they did not get the AAA needed for the course. They 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 on a course at a less desirable institution. The potential consequences of over-predicting A-Level grades are 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 Townley 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.

It is important to note that universities do have trust in Townley's UCAS predictions because we have been honest and accurate in the past.

## **Year 13 Autumn Examinations**

Year 13 Autumn Assessments are in place to offer students a chance to improve their 'Provisional Predicted Grade' provided in Summer Term of Year 12. The focus of these Assessments is the summer

term content from Year 12, however, they may include Autumn and Spring content where courses are cumulative in knowledge and skills. This is to ensure that students have the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and skills across the whole of Year 12. This is the final opportunity to provide evidence towards the formulation of the predicted grade.

## Timeline

- **January to April:** University & Futures support sessions.
- **April:** Year 12 Internal Examinations.
- May results of internal examinations
- **May to July:** UCAS specific support, UCAS accounts created, meetings with Application Mentors, students should complete their first two drafts of the personal statement, UCAS Fair attended, DIRT and revision planning based upon Year 12 Internal Examinations, and preparation for Year 13 Autumn Assessments. Provisional Predicted Grades are provided at this point.
- **September:** Year 13 Autumn Assessments. Final version of Personal Statement completed.
- **October:** Early entry applications are sent off. All other applications are checked carefully by the Sixth Form team. End of appeal timeline.
- **November:** We aim to have all applications sent off by the end of November. This is to ensure that students can focus on Year 13 content. This may not be possible for students who have not made their mind up about submitting an application.

Teachers input their predicted grades along with their comments for the student's UCAS reference around early July. This information is passed along to the UCAS Coordinator, who will then put the grades onto the student's UCAS application, along with their completed reference, once the student has submitted their form to the school for checking. To be able to check each student's application, we ask early applicants to submit their applications in line with the key UCAS dates published each year.

As always, form tutors, subject teachers and the Sixth Form team are on hand to support students onto their next steps. We will be providing students with guidance throughout the process, and we are always here to answer queries wherever necessary.

## Can I appeal my predicted grade?

Students may appeal against Final Predicted Grades only, not Provisional Predicted Grades.

### Appeal Stage One

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 Learning Manager. 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 the grade should be increased.

A student can only request a review of a UCAS predicted grade for the following reasons:

- The student has valid evidence that the estimated grade is not a true reflection of their progress.
- There is valid evidence that extenuating circumstances, such as significant illness or adverse personal circumstances have not been taken into account.
- There is valid evidence of bias and/or discrimination.

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.

## Appeal Stage Two

Should a student not be content following the outcome of the Stage One appeal, a Stage Two appeal is possible. The process for a Stage Two appeal is:

The process for requesting a review is outlined below:

1. The student submits a letter requesting Stage Two appeal. Appropriate evidence must be provided, such as a letter from a doctor or other professional giving details of any extenuating circumstances that have not previously been taken into account.
2. The letter and accompanying evidence is submitted to the Assistant Headteacher: Head of Sixth Form.
3. A member of the review panel (made up of members of the Senior Leadership Team) will make a decision as to whether:
  - a. the initial judgement was correct and therefore there will be no change to the predicted grade.
  - b. the predicted grade will be increased.
4. All requests for review will be responded to within 10 days of receipt of the letter.
5. If a student believes that the process was followed incorrectly, and not in line with the agreed policy, they may wish to raise a complaint through the school's "Compliments, concerns and complaints policy", available on the school website.

The appeal deadline is the end of half-term one of any academic year.

It is important to note that as a school we are right more often than we are wrong when it comes to UCAS predicted grades.