

COMPUTER SCIENCE

CENTRE ASSESSMENT GRADES (CAGs)

We follow the [AQA Computer Science Syllabus \(7517\)](#), a linear course that culminates in 2 papers worth 40% each, and a large self-directed documented [coursework](#) worth 20%.

Paper 1 is a computer-facing paper based on a practical, working knowledge of programming. With an almost 50:50 split between implementation of an AQA provided Skeleton Code – a substantial 600+ line source-code provided by the examining board, and a simple, unseen programming practical. Some theory questions round the paper off.

Paper 2 is a pure theory paper, hand-written and sat under classic examining conditions.

The coursework itself represents a significant proportion of evidential work. We were fortunate that the deadline for submission was agreed before the pandemic set-foot – and it was therefore necessary to draw on this significant portion of work to steer judgment.

Proportions of marks are allocated as follows:

- 1/5 : AQA Skeleton Code
- 1/5 : Programming Knowledge
- 1/5 : NEA Coursework
- 2/5 : Theory

In January of 2020, students sat mock exemplar papers 1 and 2. These papers comprised questions many of which are novel. The structure of the papers was “typically expected” of such papers. The balance of questions within these papers was discussed with a community of other teachers of Computer Science and set fairly – the papers were sat under mock-examination conditions and so are representative of student performance.

In February of 2020, students submitted their final NEAs. These were graded.

Students are already aware of how the NEA affected the grade-boundaries – we have values for 2017 – 2019. Values were adjusted slightly for 2020 that represent a best fit over the course of the years.

Considering both the NEA and Mock grades – exam rankings were generated, as well as NEA rankings.

A scaled UMS grade was calculated and used to predict an “Actual grade” based on an adjusted grade-boundary for 2020. After this stage, student names were put beside the student numbers and so became known to the teacher. It was notable that the rank follows the general expectation of the teacher, with minor adjustments at grade-boundary edge-cases.

Final CAG rankings were generated based on a working knowledge of past performance, how the NEA affected the grade boundaries, NEA ranking and a discussion with the senior leadership team regarding the often significant changes in student attitudes following the mock.

Based on historical data, and how the teacher score came out, it was decided that students generally improve by a grade from their big internal assessments. They very rarely drop a grade or rise by more than 2 except in extreme cases. Grade boundaries were decided based on a working knowledge of student performance. A “Potential grade” was then provided that follows rank order, but could potentially be 1-grade higher than the Actual grade calculated earlier.

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As the number of students in each potential-grade boundary is higher than previous years, justifications need to be made for the improved Computer Science grade over previous years.

These include:

- There was no transition period of adjustment to new teaching staff.
- Addressing areas of concerns from AQA Examination Feedback seminars – including the use of terminology, and much more stricter marking against the answer schemes.
- More thorough Diagnostic Testing
- Course pacing:
 - with significant changes made in the submission process for the NEA
 - a focus on more 1-1's based on a subject content checklist
 - teaching more content in year-1
- Significantly increasing the amount of programming literacy.